

ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

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THE WOMAN IN WHITE.

THE HOUSEKEEPER'S NARRATIVE CONTINUED.

THE next event that occurred was of so singular a nature, that it might have caused me a feeling of superstitious surprise, if my mind had not been fortified by principle against any pagan weakness of that sort. The uneasy sense of something wrong in the family which had made me wish myself away from Blackwater Park, was actually followed, strange to say, by my departure from the house. It is true that my absence was for a temporary period only: but the coincidence was, in my opinion, not the less remarkable on that account.

My departure took place under the following circumstances:

On the day when the servants all left, I was again sent for to see Sir Percival. The undeserved slur which he had cast on my management of the household, did not, I am happy to say, prevent me from returning good for evil to the best of my ability, by complying with his request as readily, and respectfully as ever. It cost me a struggle with that fallen nature which we all share in common, before I could suppress my feelings. Being accustomed to self-discipline, I accomplished the sacrifice.

I found Sir Percival and Count Fosco sitting together, again. On this occasion his lordship remained present at the interview, and assisted in the development of Sir Percival's views.

The subject to which they now requested my attention, related to the healthy change of air by which we all hoped that Miss Halcombe and Lady Glyde might soon be enabled to profit. Sir Percival mentioned that both the ladies would probably pass the autumn (by invitation of Frederick Fairlie, Esquire) at Limmeridge House, Cumberland. But before they went there, it was his opinion, confirmed by Count Fosco (who here took up the conversation, and continued it to the end), that they would benefit by a short residence first in the genial climate of Torquay. The great object, therefore, was to engage lodgings at that place, affording all the comforts and advantages of which they stood in need; and the great difficulty was to find an experienced person capable of choosing the sort of residence which they wanted. In this emergency, the Count begged to inquire, on Sir Percival's behalf, whether I would object to give the ladies

the benefit of my assistance, by proceeding myself to Torquay in their interests.

It was impossible, for a person in my situation, to meet any proposal, made in these terms, with a positive objection.

I could only venture to represent the serious inconvenience of my leaving Blackwater Park, in the extraordinary absence of all the in-door servants, with the one exception of Margaret Porecher. But Sir Percival and his lordship declared that they were both willing to put up with inconvenience for the sake of the invalids. I next respectfully suggested writing to an agent at Torquay; but I was met here by being reminded of the imprudence of taking lodgings without first seeing them. I was also informed that the Countess (who would otherwise have gone to Devonshire herself) could not, in Lady Glyde's present condition, leave her niece; and that Sir Percival and the Count had business to transact together, which would oblige them to remain at Blackwater Park. In short, it was clearly shown me, that if I did not undertake the errand, no one else could be trusted with it. Under these circumstances, I could only inform Sir Percival that my services were at the disposal of Miss Halcombe and Lady Glyde.

It was thereupon arranged that I should leave the next morning; that I should occupy the day after in examining all the most convenient houses in Torquay; and that I should return, with my report, on the third day. A memorandum was written for me by his lordship, stating the various requisites which the place I was sent to take must be found to possess; and a note of the pecuniary limit assigned to me, was added by Sir Percival.

My own idea, on reading over these instructions, was, that no such residence as I saw described could be found at any watering-place in England; and that, even if it could by chance be discovered, it would certainly not be parted with for any period, on such terms as I was permitted to offer. I hinted at these difficulties to both the gentlemen; but Sir Percival (who undertook to answer me) did not appear to feel them. It was not for me to dispute the question. I said no more; but I felt a very strong conviction that the business on which I was sent away was so beset by difficulties that my errand was almost hopeless at starting.

Before I left, I took care to satisfy myself that Miss Halcombe was going on favourably.

There was a painful expression of anxiety in her face, which made me fear that her mind, on first recovering itself, was not at ease. But she was certainly strengthening more rapidly than I could have ventured to anticipate; and she was able to send kind messages to Lady Glyde, saying that she was fast getting well, and entreating her ladyship not to exert herself again too soon. I left her in charge of Mrs. Rubelle, who was still as quietly independent of every one else in the house as ever. When I knocked at Lady Glyde's door, before going away, I was told that she was still sadly weak and depressed; my informant being the Countess, who was then keeping her company in her room. Sir Percival and the Count were walking on the road to the lodge, as I was driven by in the chaise. I bowed to them, and quitted the house, with not a living soul left in the servants' offices but Margaret Porcher.

Every one must feel, what I have felt myself since that time, that these circumstances were more than unusual—they were almost suspicious. Let me, however, say again, that it was impossible for me, in my dependent position, to act otherwise than I did.

The result of my errand at Torquay was exactly what I had foreseen. No such lodgings as I was instructed to take could be found in the whole place; and the terms I was permitted to give were much too low for the purpose, even if I had been able to discover what I wanted. I returned to Blackwater Park on the third day; and informed Sir Percival, who met me at the door, that my journey had been taken in vain. He seemed too much occupied with some other subject to care about the failure of my errand, and his first words informed me that even in the short time of my absence, another remarkable change had taken place in the house.

The Count and Countess Fosco had left Blackwater Park for their new residence in St. John's Wood.

I was not made aware of the motive for this sudden departure—I was only told that the Count had been very particular in leaving his kind compliments for me. When I ventured on asking Sir Percival whether Lady Glyde had any one to attend to her comforts in the absence of the Countess, he replied that she had Margaret Porcher to wait on her; and he added that a woman from the village had been sent for to do the work down stairs.

The answer really shocked me—there was such a glaring impropriety in permitting an under-housemaid to fill the place of confidential attendant on Lady Glyde. I went upstairs at once, and met Margaret on the bedroom landing. Her services had not been required (naturally enough); her mistress having sufficiently recovered, that morning, to be able to leave her bed. I asked, next, after Miss Halcombe; but I was answered in a slouching, sulky way, which left me no wiser than I was before. I did not choose to repeat the question, and perhaps provoke an impertinent reply. It was in every respect more becoming, to a person in

my position, to present myself immediately in Lady Glyde's room.

I found that her ladyship had certainly gained in health during the last three days. Although still sadly weak and nervous, she was able to get up without assistance, and to walk slowly about her room, feeling no worse effect from the exertion than a slight sensation of fatigue. She had been made a little anxious that morning about Miss Halcombe, through having received no news of her from any one. I thought this seemed to imply a blamable want of attention on the part of Mrs. Rubelle; but I said nothing, and remained with Lady Glyde, to assist her to dress. When she was ready, we both left the room together to go to Miss Halcombe.

We were stopped in the passage by the appearance of Sir Percival. He looked as if he had been purposely waiting there to see us.

"Where are you going?" he said to Lady Glyde.

"To Marian's room," she answered.

"It may spare you a disappointment," remarked Sir Percival, "if I tell you at once that you will not find her there."

"Not find her there!"

"No. She left the house yesterday morning with Fosco and his wife."

Lady Glyde was not strong enough to bear the surprise of this extraordinary statement. She turned fearfully pale; and leaned back against the wall, looking at her husband in dead silence.

I was so astonished myself, that I hardly knew what to say. I asked Sir Percival if he really meant that Miss Halcombe had left Blackwater Park.

"I certainly mean it," he answered.

"In her state, Sir Percival! Without mentioning her intentions to Lady Glyde!"

Before he could reply, her ladyship recovered herself a little, and spoke.

"Impossible!" she cried out, in a loud, frightened manner; taking a step or two forward from the wall. "Where was the doctor? where was Mr. Dawson when Marian went away?"

"Mr. Dawson wasn't wanted, and wasn't here," said Sir Percival. "He left of his own accord, which is enough of itself to show that she was strong enough to travel. How you stare! If you don't believe she has gone, look for yourself. Open her room door, and all the other room doors, if you like."

She took him at his word, and I followed her. There was no one in Miss Halcombe's room but Margaret Porcher, who was busy setting it to rights. There was no one in the spare rooms, or the dressing-rooms, when we looked into them afterwards. Sir Percival still waited for us in the passage. As we were leaving the last room that we had examined, Lady Glyde whispered, "Don't go, Mrs. Michelson! don't leave me, for God's sake!" Before I could say anything in return, she was out again in the passage, speaking to her husband.

"What does it mean, Sir Percival? I insist—I beg and pray you will tell me what it means!"

"It means," he answered, "that Miss Halcombe was strong enough yesterday morning to sit up, and be dressed; and that she insisted on taking advantage of Fosco's going to London, to go there too."

"To London!"

"Yes—on her way to Limmeridge."

Lady Glyde turned, and appealed to me.

"You saw Miss Halcombe last," she said.

"Did you think she looked fit to travel in four-and-twenty hours afterwards?"

"Not in *my* opinion, your ladyship."

Sir Percival, on his side, instantly turned, and appealed to me also.

"Before you went away," he said, "did you, or did you not, tell the nurse that Miss Halcombe looked much stronger and better?"

"I certainly made the remark, Sir Percival."

He addressed her ladyship again, the moment I offered that reply.

"Set one of Mrs. Michelson's opinions fairly against the other," he said, "and try to be reasonable about a perfectly plain matter. If she had not been well enough to be moved, do you think we should any of us have risked letting her go? She has got three competent people to look after her—Fosco and your aunt, and Mrs. Rubelle, who went away with them expressly for that purpose. They took a whole carriage yesterday, and made a bed for her on the seat, in case she felt tired. To-day, Fosco and Mrs. Rubelle go on with her themselves to Cumberland—"

"Why does Marian go to Limmeridge, and leave me here by myself?" said her ladyship, interrupting Sir Percival.

"Because your uncle won't receive you till he has seen your sister first," he replied. "Have you forgotten the letter he wrote to her, at the beginning of her illness. It was shown to you; you read it yourself; and you ought to remember it."

"I do remember it."

"If you do, why should you be surprised at her leaving you? You want to be back at Limmeridge; and she has gone there to get your uncle's leave for you, on his own terms."

Poor Lady Glyde's eyes filled with tears.

"Marian never left me before," she said, "without bidding me good-by."

"She would have bid you good-by this time," returned Sir Percival, "if she had not been afraid of herself and of you. She knew you would try to stop her; she knew you would distress her by crying. Do you want to make any more objections? If you do, you must come down stairs and ask questions in the dining-room. These worries upset me. I want a glass of wine."

He left us suddenly.

His manner all through this strange conversation had been very unlike what it usually was. He seemed to be almost as nervous and fluttered, every now and then, as his lady herself. I should never have supposed that his health had been so delicate, or his composure so easy to upset.

I tried to prevail on Lady Glyde to go back to her room; but it was useless. She stopped in the passage, with the look of a woman whose mind was panic-stricken:

"Something has happened to my sister!" she said.

"Remember, my lady, what surprising energy there is in Miss Halcombe," I replied. "She might well make an effort which other ladies, in her situation, would be unfit for. I hope and believe there is nothing wrong—I do indeed."

"I must follow Marian!" said her ladyship, with the same panic-stricken look. "I must go where she has gone; I must see that she is alive and well with my own eyes. Come! come down with me to Sir Percival."

I hesitated; fearing that my presence might be considered an intrusion; I attempted to represent this to her ladyship; but she was deaf to me. She held my arm fast enough to force me to go down stairs with her; and she still clung to me with all the little strength she had, at the moment when I opened the dining-room door.

Sir Percival was sitting at the table with a decanter of wine before him. He raised the glass to his lips, as we went in, and drained it at a draught. Seeing that he looked at me angrily when he put it down again, I attempted to make some apology for my accidental presence in the room.

"Do you suppose there are any secrets going on here?" he broke out, suddenly; "there are none—there is nothing underhand; nothing kept from you or from any one." After speaking those strange words, loudly and sternly, he filled himself another glass of wine, and asked Lady Glyde what she wanted of him.

"If my sister is fit to travel, I am fit to travel," said her ladyship, with more firmness than she had yet shown. "I come to beg you will make allowances for my anxiety about Marian, and let me follow her at once, by the afternoon train."

"You must wait till to-morrow," replied Sir Percival; "and then, if you don't hear to the contrary, you can go. I don't suppose you are at all likely to hear to the contrary—so I shall write to Fosco by to-night's post."

He said those last words, holding his glass up to the light, and looking at the wine in it, instead of at Lady Glyde. Indeed, he never once looked at her throughout the conversation. Such a singular want of good breeding in a gentleman of his rank impressed me, I own, very painfully.

"Why should you write to Count Fosco?" she asked, in extreme surprise.

"To tell him to expect you by the mid-day train," said Sir Percival. "He will meet you at the station, when you get to London, and take you on to sleep at your aunt's, in St. John's Wood."

Lady Glyde's hand began to tremble violently round my arm—why, I could not imagine.

"There is no necessity for Count Fosco to meet me," she said. "I would rather not stay in London to sleep."

"You must. You can't take the whole journey to Cumberland in one day. You must rest a night in London—and I don't choose you to go by yourself to an hotel. Fosco made the offer to your uncle to give you house-room on the way down; and your uncle has accepted it. Here! here is a letter from him, addressed to yourself. I ought to have sent it up this morning; but I forgot. Read it, and see what Mr. Fairlie himself says to you."

Lady Glyde looked at the letter for a moment; and then placed it in my hands.

"Read it," she said, faintly. "I don't know what is the matter with me. I can't read it, myself."

It was a note of only three lines—so short and so careless, that it quite struck me. If I remember correctly, it contained no more than these words:

"Dearest Laura, Please come, whenever you like. Break the journey by sleeping at your aunt's house. Grieved to hear of dear Marian's illness. Affectionately yours, Frederick Fairlie."

"I would rather not go there—I would rather not stay a night in London," said her ladyship, breaking out eagerly with those words, before I had quite done reading the note, short as it was. "Don't write to Count Fosco! Pray, pray don't write to him!"

Sir Percival filled another glass from the decanter, so awkwardly that he upset it, and spilt all the wine over the table. "My sight seems to be failing me," he muttered to himself, in an odd, muffled voice. He slowly set the glass up again, refilled it, and drained it once more at a draught. I began to fear, from his look and manner, that the wine was getting into his head.

"Pray don't write to Count Fosco!" persisted Lady Glyde, more earnestly than ever.

"Why not, I should like to know!" cried Sir Percival, with a sudden burst of anger that startled us both. "Where can you stay more properly in London, than at the place your uncle himself chooses for you—at your aunt's house? Ask Mrs. Michelson."

The arrangement proposed was so unquestionably the right and the proper one, that I could make no possible objection to it. Much as I sympathised with Lady Glyde in other respects, I could not sympathise with her in her unjust prejudices against Count Fosco. I never before met with any lady, of her rank and station, who was so lamentably narrow-minded on the subject of foreigners. Neither her uncle's note, nor Sir Percival's increasing impatience, seemed to have the least effect on her. She still objected to staying a night in London; she still implored her husband not to write to the Count.

"Drop it!" said Sir Percival, rudely turning his back on us. "If you haven't sense enough to know what is best for yourself, other people must know for you. The arrangement is made; and there is an end of it. You are only wanted to do what Miss Halcombe has done before you—"

"Marian?" repeated her ladyship, in a bewildered manner; "Marian sleeping in Count Fosco's house!"

"Yes, in Count Fosco's house. She slept there, last night, to break the journey. And you are to follow her example, and do what your uncle tells you. You are to sleep at Fosco's, to-morrow night, as your sister did, to break the journey. Don't throw too many obstacles in my way! don't make me repent of letting you go at all!"

He started to his feet; and suddenly walked out into the verandah, through the open glass doors.

"Will your ladyship excuse me," I whispered, "if I suggest that we had better not wait here till Sir Percival comes back? I am very much afraid he is over-excited with wine."

She consented to leave the room, in a weary, absent manner.

As soon as we were safe up-stairs again, I did all I could to compose her ladyship's spirits. I reminded her that Mr. Fairlie's letters to Miss Halcombe and to herself did certainly sanction, and even render necessary, sooner or later, the course that had been taken. She agreed to this, and even admitted, of her own accord, that both letters were strictly in character with her uncle's peculiar disposition—but her fears about Miss Halcombe, and her unaccountable dread of sleeping at the Count's house in London, still remained unshaken in spite of every consideration that I could urge. I thought it my duty to protest against Lady Glyde's unfavourable opinion of his lordship; and I did so, with becoming forbearance and respect.

"Your ladyship will pardon my freedom," I remarked, in conclusion; "but it is said, 'by their fruits ye shall know them.' I am sure the Count's constant kindness and constant attention from the very beginning of Miss Halcombe's illness, merit our best confidence and esteem. Even his lordship's serious misunderstanding with Mr. Dawson was entirely attributable to his anxiety on Miss Halcombe's account."

"What misunderstanding?" inquired her ladyship, with a look of sudden interest.

I related the unhappy circumstances under which Mr. Dawson had withdrawn his attendance—mentioning them all the more readily, because I disapproved of Sir Percival's continuing to conceal what had happened (as he had done in my presence) from the knowledge of Lady Glyde.

Her ladyship started up, with every appearance of being additionally agitated and alarmed by what I had told her.

"Worse! worse than I thought!" she said, walking about the room, in a bewildered manner. "The Count knew Mr. Dawson would never consent to Marian's taking a journey—he purposely insulted the doctor to get him out of the house."

"Oh, my lady! my lady!" I remonstrated.

"Mrs. Michelson," she went on, vehemently; "no words that ever were spoken will persuade

me that my sister is in that man's power and in that man's house, with her own consent. My horror of him is such, that nothing Sir Percival could say, and no letters my uncle could write, would induce me, if I had only my own feelings to consult, to eat, drink, or sleep under his roof. But my misery of suspense about Marian gives me the courage to follow her anywhere—to follow her even into Count Fosco's house."

"I thought it right, at this point, to mention that Miss Halcombe had already gone on to Cumberland, according to Sir Percival's account of the matter.

"I am afraid to believe it!" answered her ladyship. "I am afraid she is still in that man's house. If I am wrong—if she has really gone on to Limmeridge—I am resolved I will not sleep to-morrow night under Count Fosco's roof. My dearest friend in the world, next to my sister, lives near London. You have heard me, you have heard Miss Halcombe, speak of Mrs. Vesey? I mean to write, and propose to sleep at her house. I don't know how I shall get there—I don't know how I shall avoid the Count—but to that refuge I will escape in some way, if my sister has gone to Cumberland. All I ask of you to do, is to see yourself that my letter to Mrs. Vesey goes to London to-night, as certainly as Sir Percival's letter goes to Count Fosco. I have reasons for not trusting the post-bag down stairs. Will you keep my secret, and help me in this? it is the last favour, perhaps, that I shall ever ask of you."

I hesitated—I thought it all very strange—I almost feared that her ladyship's mind had been a little affected by recent anxiety and suffering. At my own risk, however, I ended by giving my consent. If the letter had been addressed to a stranger, or to any one but a lady so well known to me by report as Mrs. Vesey, I might have refused. I thank God—looking to what happened afterwards—I thank God I never thwarted that wish, or any other, which Lady Glyde expressed to me, on the last day of her residence at Blackwater Park.

The letter was written, and given into my hands. I myself put it into the post-box in the village, that evening.

We saw nothing more of Sir Percival for the rest of the day. I slept, by Lady Glyde's own desire, in the next room to hers, with the door open between us. There was something so strange and dreadful in the loneliness and emptiness of the house, that I was glad, on my side, to have a companion near me. Her ladyship sat up late, reading letters and burning them, and emptying her drawers and cabinets of little things she prized, as if she never expected to return to Blackwater Park. Her sleep was sadly disturbed when she at last went to bed: she cried out in it, several times—once, so loud that she woke herself. Whatever her dreams were, she did not think fit to communicate them to me. Perhaps, in my situation, I had no right to expect that she should do so. It matters little, now. I was sorry for her—I was indeed heartily sorry for her all the same.

The next day was fine and sunny. Sir Percival came up, after breakfast, to tell us that the chaise would be at the door at a quarter to twelve; the train to London stopping at our station, at twenty minutes after. He informed Lady Glyde that he was obliged to go out, but added that he hoped to be back before she left. If any unforeseen accident delayed him, I was to accompany her to the station, and to take special care that she was in time for the train. Sir Percival communicated these directions very hastily; walking, here and there, about the room all the time. Her ladyship looked attentively after him, wherever he went. He never once looked at her in return.

She only spoke when he had done; and then she stopped him as he approached the door, by holding out her hand.

"I shall see you no more," she said, in a very marked manner. "This is our parting—our parting, it may be for ever. Will you try to forgive me, Percival, as heartily as I forgive you?"

His face turned of an awful whiteness all over; and great beads of perspiration broke out on his bald forehead. "I shall come back," he said—and made for the door, as hastily as if his wife's farewell words had frightened him out of the room.

I had never liked Sir Percival—but the manner in which he left Lady Glyde made me feel ashamed of having eaten his bread and lived in his service. I thought of saying a few comforting and Christian words to the poor lady; but there was something in her face, as she looked after her husband when the door closed on him, that made me alter my mind and keep silence.

At the time named, the chaise drew up at the gates. Her ladyship was right—Sir Percival never came back. I waited for him till the last moment—and waited in vain.

No positive responsibility lay on my shoulders; and yet, I did not feel easy in my mind. "It is of your own free will," I said, as the chaise drove through the lodge-gates, "that your ladyship goes to London?"

"I will go anywhere," she answered, "to end the dreadful suspense that I am suffering at this moment."

She had made me feel almost as anxious and as uncertain about Miss Halcombe as she felt herself. I presumed to ask her to write me a line, if all went well in London. She answered, "Most willingly, Mrs. Michelson." "We all have our crosses to bear, my lady," I said, seeing her silent and thoughtful, after she had promised to write. She made no reply: she seemed to be too much wrapped up in her own thoughts to attend to me. "I fear your ladyship rested badly last night," I remarked, after waiting a little. "Yes," she said; "I was terribly disturbed by dreams." "Indeed, my lady?" I thought she was going to tell me her dreams; but no, when she spoke next it was only to ask a question. "You posted the letter to Mrs. Vesey with your own hands?" "Yes, my lady." "Did Sir Percival say, yesterday,

that Count Fosco was to meet me at the terminus in London?" "He did, my lady."

She sighed heavily when I answered that last question, and said no more.

We arrived at the station, with hardly two minutes to spare. The gardener (who had driven us) managed about the luggage, while I took the ticket. The whistle of the train was sounding, when I joined her ladyship on the platform. She looked very strangely, and pressed her hand over her heart, as if some sudden pain or fright had overcome her at that moment.

"I wish you were going with me!" she said, catching eagerly at my arm, when I gave her the ticket.

If there had been time; if I had felt the day before, as I felt then, I would have made my arrangements to accompany her—even though the doing so had obliged me to give Sir Percival warning on the spot. As it was, her wishes expressed at the last moment only, were expressed too late for me to comply with them. She seemed to understand this herself before I could explain it, and did not repeat her desire to have me for a travelling companion. The train drew up at the platform. She gave the gardener a present for his children, and took my hand, in her simple, hearty manner, before she got into the carriage.

"You have been very kind to me and to my sister," she said—"kind when we were both friendless. I shall remember you gratefully, as long as I live to remember any one. Good-by—and God bless you!"

She spoke those words, with a tone and a look which brought the tears into my eyes—she spoke them as if she was bidding me farewell for ever.

"Good-by, my lady," I said, putting her into the carriage, and trying to cheer her; "good-by, for the present only; good-by, with my best and kindest wishes for happier times!"

She shook her head, and shuddered as she settled herself in the carriage. The guard closed the door. "Do you believe in dreams?" she whispered to me, at the window. "My dreams, last night, were dreams I have never had before. The terror of them is hanging over me still." The whistle sounded before I could answer, and the train moved. Her pale quiet face looked at me, for the last time, looked sorrowfully and solemnly from the window—she waved her hand—and I saw her no more.

Towards five o'clock on the afternoon of that same day, having a little time to myself in the midst of the household duties which now pressed upon me, I sat down alone in my own room, to try and compose my mind with the volume of my husband's Sermons. For the first time in my life, I found my attention wandering over those pious and cheering words. Concluding that Lady Glyde's departure must have disturbed me far more seriously than I had myself supposed, I put the book aside, and went out to take a turn in the garden. Sir Percival had not yet returned, to my knowledge,

so I could feel no hesitation about showing myself in the grounds.

On turning the corner of the house, and gaining a view of the garden, I was startled by seeing a stranger walking in it. The stranger was a woman—she was lounging along the path, with her back to me, and was gathering the flowers.

As I approached, she heard me, and turned round.

My blood curdled in my veins. The strange woman in the garden was Mrs. Rubelle.

I could neither move, nor speak. She came up to me, as composedly as ever, with her flowers in her hand.

"What is the matter, ma'am?" she said, quietly.

"You here!" I gasped out. "Not gone to London! Not gone to Cumberland!"

Mrs. Rubelle smelt at her flowers with a smile of malicious pity.

"Certainly not," she said. "I have never left Blackwater Park."

I summoned breath enough and courage enough for another question.

"Where is Miss Halcombe?"

Mrs. Rubelle fairly laughed at me, this time; and answered in these words:

"Miss Halcombe, ma'am, has not left Blackwater Park, either."

A PLEA FOR COAL-MINERS.

A THOUSAND men are killed every year in coal-mines. Upon the last eight years the annual average of deaths by accident in coal-mines is one thousand and two. This death rate is about eight times greater than that of death by accident among the whole population. For insurance against death by accident the charge actually made in the case of miners is, therefore, eight times the ordinary rate. A collier's wife becomes a widow, on the average, fourteen years sooner than the wife of an agricultural labourer. Perhaps it is a justification of this state of things to assert the fact that a greater proportion of persons are killed in the metalliferous mines than in the collieries, and that the average duration of metalliferous miners' lives throughout the kingdom is not above thirty-three years. Perhaps it is a justification of this state of things to say, Miners are ignorant, their blood be on their heads! Perhaps it is a justification of this state of things to say, Coal-miners are under inspection, and what would you more? We, knowing that a large number of these deaths—we say nothing, here, of the burnings, maimings, and crushings short of death—are preventable, consider that they have to be prevented, and not justified. A certain degree of risk is, indeed, inseparable from the miner's occupation; but the preventable character of a great number of the accidents that happen can be easily demonstrated. If we can save only three hundred and sixty-five lives out of the yearly thousand, that will be a life a day. It is within the truth to say that in our coal-mines a

life a day is sacrificed to one of the two idols, Obstinacy and Indifference.

In Durham, where the collier is son, grandson, and great-grandson, to a collier, with a line of mining ancestry, although the nature of the coal is more than ordinarily dangerous, accidents are comparatively few. In the midland counties, where many of the miners come as strangers to the work, accidents are more numerous; so you see how it is! say the defenders of what is. We do see how it is. In the northern districts, where the miners have coal in their very blood, they are not left to take care of themselves. About one man in every six is employed, not in coal-getting, but in superintending ventilation, keeping up roads, setting timber, removing obstructions, and attending generally to what is necessary to safety. In most other parts of the country, colliers are expected to do these things for themselves. The annual loss of a hundred and twenty-six lives in these districts, beyond the standard of the naturally more dangerous collieries of the north, is justified by the fact that the men are less up to their work, and maintained by the fact that if they be twice as much in need of being minded, they are only half as much helped and looked after.

An explosion is a terrible thing when, as at Sandhill, it kills at a blow nearly two hundred men, makes ninety widows, deprives more than two hundred children of the fathers who put bread into their mouths. But the miners are not killed by explosions chiefly. Even more men are crushed by the fall of coal upon their heads, for want of sufficient care in setting up props to support it as the miners push forward their excavations. The average number of annual deaths by explosion is two hundred and forty-eight, by falls of the roof, three hundred and seventy-one—more than a man a day through the year. Another kind of accident, killing in some years more men than are killed by explosion, and on an average within thirty of the number, would be most disgraceful to the science of our engineers, if it were not true that it is almost wholly preventable. This is the class of accidents in shafts. Large as the recorded number is, we have reason to doubt whether it includes all that happen. Arms and legs are daily broken, and at least four lives are lost every week by accidents upon the threshold of their work. Men are killed by the falling of stone or coal over the edge of the pit mouth upon them as they ascend or descend in baskets unprotected by the caging that would save them altogether from this kind of risk. Men are thrown to the bottom out of baskets that would rarely be dangerous if they were caged and supplied with proper guide-rods. For want of proper indicators, signals, and breaks, and the undivided attention of the engine-driver, men are drawn over the pulleys. A safety skip has been invented, simple in construction, so arranged that the rope is inevitably detached before the cage reaches the pulley, and the cage supported at the place it has reached. Its in-

ventor, Mr. Bailey, is a practical mining engineer at Wednesbury, but comparatively little use has been made of his invention. When the British Association met in Birmingham, a gentleman advertised that he would exhibit a contrivance to prevent the sudden running down of the cage with the men. Persons of almost every profession went to look at it, and expressed their high approval of it, but not a single coal-owner or manager of mines went to see it. Was it not something "new fangled," and were not coal-owners already spending money enough upon their pits? So, the old sorts of accidents go on as in the old way, and in the mere entrance shaft, in which the men spend only the smallest fraction of their time, one-fifth of all the deaths by violence occur.

The statements we here make, are mainly founded on the substance of a paper and discussion on the subject of accidents in coal-mines, read and held at the Society of Arts not many weeks ago. The paper was by P. H. Holland. The discussion, fairly representing arguments on both sides of the question, was supported chiefly by Mr. Edwin Chadwick, Mr. Robert Hunt, Mr. John Hedley, and Mr. Robert Rawlinson. The writer of this little summary, compiles from what he has read, under a deep impression of its harmony with all that he has seen and known during years spent in attendance on the sick and wounded miners of a midland district. When one has felt every week the grating of a bone carelessly broken; when one has heard the wail of the widow in whose little cottage lie the corpses of her husband and her two stout-hearted sons, who passed the threshold in the morning, hale and noisy, to be carried back over it, ice-cold, and pale, and silent, before the hour when their daily labour should end, and so long before the hour when their life labour should have closed; when one has become familiar with the sight of young bodies flayed alive by the scorch of fire-damp, painfully awaiting death; and when one knows that nearly half this suffering exists only because it has existed heretofore, and men are slow to change the worst of ways when once it has become a settled way; it is no longer easy placidly to accept the huge class of Preventable Accidents as part of the common lot of man.

In the first days of our penal colonisation, there was in the transport ships for the conveyance of convicts, a most frightful amount of preventable death. Fifty, and even sixty per cent of those who embarked alive, would be dead at the end of a voyage. There were complaints, inquiries, promises, and good intentions. The skippers could point out the recklessness of sailors who shut hatches down and exclude necessary air, or will not maintain cleanliness; it was hard to prevent greedy ship captains from pressing on the space available for passengers, by taking an excess of cargo. There was, however, effort enough made to reduce the mortality upon the voyage out, to a third or a fourth part of all the convicts shipped. At last

it occurred to somebody to change the form of contract with the shipowners, and pay—not for the number of men embarked, but for the number landed alive. Losses were, of course, fairly considered in the bargain, but, the bargain made, every life saved was money gained, every life lost was money lost. The shippers at once appointed medical officers to see to the health of the convict passengers, and the amount of their payment from the owners was also made to depend upon the number of lives saved. The deaths presently fell from one in ten to one in forty-six, and at last came to be only one and a half in a hundred, showing a better state of health than the same class of men would have enjoyed at home. Wherever the same principle has been applied to emigrant ships, it has been pleasant, says Mr. Chadwick, its chief advocate, to see shippers cutting holes for ventilation, and considering their space with a devout regard for sanitary laws.

The men who receive truths from without, coming as mere information and advice, with obstinacy or indifference, give their minds to them actively when they become questions of income. If they are to be judged for it, we know not who will dare to cast the stone. Owners under whom preventable accidents constantly occur, are very often generous and kind men, looked up to with a well-grounded affection by all their dependents. Accidents, when they are of any magnitude, do, as the case now stands, affect the owner's pocket very seriously; but then they are, until they occur, future and hypothetical losses, that weigh little in the balance against present certain gain by dangerous economy or over-greedy haste in holing. There is Lord Campbell's Act, too, which enforces compensation for an accidental injury from any man by whose neglect it has been caused. But the proximate cause of an accident in a mine, is commonly a miner; it is but seldom that direct responsibility can be traced to the owner; and if it can, how is a miner's widow, living upon half-a-crown-a-week parish allowance, to assert her claim in a law court against one of the wealthiest men in the county?

Probably the true remedy, not only in the case of accidents in coal-mines, but in the case of all accidents, preventable or inevitable, is to adopt the plan that works perfectly well in France, and to require every employer to compensate the sufferer, or the representative of one who has been killed in his service, without any consideration of whose fault may have occasioned the misfortune. The working of the general rule is far less grievous than the working of Lord Campbell's Act. In combination with a free system of insurance by employers against accident to those in his employ—the cost being covered by a very minute additional charge on their productions—such a system would press on none but those who were found by insurance-offices to pass beyond the average of risk in conduct of their business. A German labourer in France, employed in driving piles, left his own gang, went to a part of the

works in which he had no business to be, while there incautiously placed his hand upon a pile-head that was being driven, and so got it crushed. The French law made his employer responsible for compensation, and there was no injustice felt. The educated man is answerable for the ignorant; employer and employed are saved all risk of litigation. The employer's liability is fixed, reducible to calculation, and may be met by a proportionate insurance charge to be reckoned among the expenses of his business. In the case of collieries, an additional charge of a penny on the ton of coal would be enough to meet the heavy average expense of compensation to the wounded and the widow.

But what would be the natural effect of such a system in the working? We may judge from the experience of fire-offices. In Manchester the blowing engine for cleaning cotton used to be in the factory building. Fire-offices required for this arrangement extra premium of insurance, and the blowing engines are now all in detached buildings. Cotton waste, liable when in heaps to ignite spontaneously, would vitiate a policy if kept in the factory. Owners are very strict in causing it to be removed. Some years ago, two very destructive fires occurred in Manchester. One, spread in consequence of the warehouse being lined with wood paneling; the other, from fire being communicated to an outside wooden cornice. The companies agreed to charge extra premium for insurance in such cases, and in a year scarcely one wooden external cornice or wooden lining to a warehouse meant to contain valuable property, was to be found. In the same manner, companies insuring against accidents in collieries, suspected of no "maudlin philanthropy," would tax most heavily the pits in which there was least precaution against loss of life, would require extra premium for each cause of danger, and would make void a policy for the infringement of its own wholesome conditions. It would be every owner's interest to qualify for insurance at the lowest premium by using all the fair precautions against accident.

In the case of the safety-lamps, for example, it is said that the men *will* open them and use the naked light. But the great northern district, in which there is especial risk from fire-damp, contributes only twenty-one out of the two hundred and forty-eight annual deaths from explosion. As much care taken everywhere as they take in the north, would have saved, upon this item alone, a thousand lives during the last eight years. Safety-lamps may be locked. There is a kind of safety-lamp also that cannot be opened without at the same time extinguishing the light. One inspector reports that of a hundred and seventy-two deaths by explosion in his district, a hundred and seventy-one were attributed to the use of naked lights, and that out of eleven hundred and fifty-four such deaths reported in five years, twelve only occurred where safety-lamps had been used, all of which were defective. Another inspector says that "out of one thou-

sand and ninety-nine deaths, seven only were with safety-lamps," and adds that "no instance has been properly authenticated of explosion from a proper safety-lamp; and in the most dangerous mines of England, where the discharge of fire-damp is greatest, but where locked safety-lamps are exclusively used, explosions are almost unknown."

GETTING UP EARLY.

THE human race has, at various periods, been subject to delusions, more or less widely spread, more or less enthusiastically accepted, more or less extended in their duration. But, taking all these into consideration, from Mahomedanism, or the worship of the sun, or of Odin, down to that form of idolatry prevalent in the present day, which, like a monomania, attacks otherwise tolerably sane people, and causes them to adore hideous canine or gallinaceous monsters called Skye terriers and Cochinchina fowls, there has been no delusion, I take it, so general and so lasting as that respecting early rising.

I was, at a very early age, theoretically and practically opposed to this strange and dangerous doctrine; and a long experience of its effects has caused an ineradicable conviction against it, where formerly there only existed an instinct.

Insects are early risers, so are birds, so are beasts (those whose intelligences have been improved by domesticity, less so, generally speaking, than wild beasts), savages, children whose physical is much ahead of their mental development, manual labourers who are similarly situated,—all these rise "with the lark," go forth when damp and miasma are rife, pass through a day of restless activity that it is fatiguing even to witness, and then, when the calm and beautiful and thoughtful evening arrives, are stupified and stultified with an offensive somnolence.

It has been my fate to mix much with and know something of, the habits of a large number of the noteworthy men and women of the day, and at this moment I can only call to mind one such being who, from choice (doubtless some are driven to it by necessity), is an early riser, and of course one must make allowance for the eccentricities of genius.

Let us take early rising in the country; that is, early rising at its best.

Overnight it has been agreed, for some cause or reason unnecessary here to dwell upon, that I am to get up early. I go to bed with those dreadful words haunting me, howling in my ears like Old Dog Tray, casting a gloom over my spirit that no words can describe, keeping me in the shrinking condition of a new Damocles, with the addition to my misery that I know my fate to be inevitable, that I have no hope whatever that the hair won't break, that I have the certainty that the sword, after hanging over my devoted head all through the black and ghastly night, *will* most positively fall on me at a certain hour in the dreaded morning. I am not,

however, given to make the worst of things, so I say to myself, "You must make haste and go to bed, and you must get to sleep in good time, because you know you have to get up early!"

So I begin to undress with uncomfortable haste, having given myself only three-quarters of an hour by the clock on my bedroom mantelpiece to get to bed in, instead of my usual dear dawdling hour and a half. And yet, in these wretched three-quarters, I have much more to do than usual, for I must put everything in readiness for the morrow: knowing if I don't, how additionally hopeless, and helpless, and desperate I shall be in the morning.

Ah, there you are on the shelf, Keats (I'm sure the man who wrote the Ode to the Nightingale couldn't have been an early riser; an early riser must have been snoring when the Night,

Cluster'd around by all her starry rays, inspired him with that divinest song), but I can't take you down, my Keats; I can't go on with Hyperion, because, if it be only to read a page, I shall keep on reading till Heaven knows what hour, and I have to get up early. However, I suppose there's no reason why I should deny myself the pleasure of thinking of you? I should think early rising even, is hardly tyrannical enough, hardly engrossing enough, hardly sufficiently crushing to the mental energies, to forbid that!

Ha! there's half an hour gone, and I'm not anything like ready for bed. Beloved Keats, you must not haunt me so; you see, while thinking of you, this—no, I mustn't lose my temper—early rising went clean out of my head. So I'll think no more of you; I dare not.

Regal his shape majestic, a vast shade
In midst of his own brightness.

Where is it that I have come across a line or two very like those? I *know* I've seen them somewhere: the self-same image, expressed much in the same manner. Is it in Milton? It sounds sufficiently Miltonic; mightn't it be in some of the angel passages in *Paradise Lost*? I'll see. See, ay—pass an hour—two hours—hunting for what I may not be able to find after all, when I've got to get up early!

It's of no use; I tear off what remains of my day clothing, rush about my room (I have already been more than an hour "getting to bed"), complete my preparations for the morrow, plunge in a mixture of rage and sulks between the sheets, cover myself up, and resolutely set myself to the task of going to sleep.

I close my eyes very tight; I try laboriously, one after another, all the expedients I have ever heard mentioned, or have ever attempted with any shadow of success, to produce on the instant healthy and refreshing sleep. I think of a flock of sheep leaping one by one over a hurdle; I think of falling water, of waving corn, of wind in trees; still somehow or other my mind won't stick to these ideas continuously, but *will* go wandering off to certain remembered

scenes and sounds suggested by such images. Then I try to do what I never was able to do in my life—repeat the multiplication-table all through, and dodge myself in it. I stick at seven times eight, and go back to the beginning, and get more puzzled and less sleepy every minute. Clearly all these are fallacies; let me try, mental devices having failed, if there is anything to be done by attacking the physical condition. Somebody, I think, told me, at some time or other, that drinking a glass of cold water was efficacious in cases of insomnia. I hate water administered internally, but I'll try it; I'll try anything; I can't be worse; and, as nepenthe is not to be had, give me water. Bah! Tepid! Standing all the summer day in the room, it is like drinking liquefied swansdown, or any soft, warm, tasteless, sliding thing that gives no marked sensation of any kind to the palate.

Well, it's gone, and I go back to bed, and beat up the pillows, and place them (as somebody else, at some other time, has advised), not under the head only, but under the neck and shoulders too, and again I shut up my eyes tighter than before, and set to work to make my mind a total blank—to exclude all ideas, feelings, recollections, and impressions whatsoever.

Regal his shape majestic, a vast shade.

Oh, Keats, Keats! Gracious powers, Keats! have you forgotten that I have to get up early?

Regal his shape majestic—

I must find out where the line is, or where lines like that, are, if I die for it.

I get up and take Milton from the shelf, and begin turning over the pages of *Paradise Lost* by the night-light, but somehow I feel it isn't there. Well, then, where is it? That's the next question. Shakespeare? Pooh, nonsense! not a bit like Shakespeare. Dante? No, it's not Dante. Spenser? Ah, may be! I think it is Spenser. I seize *The Faerie Queene* with the vigour of hope, and turn from canto to canto. I have it!

And hid in his own brightness.

Rather like it? Some of these days I mean to publish a chapter or two on plagiaries, wilful or accidental. Well, well, never mind now; you've satisfied yourself on that point, so do go to bed, for you know you have to get up early.

So I go to bed again; but going to sleep is quite a different thing, and I never felt further from it in my life. Turn how I will, lie how I may, the one thought that I have to get up early, is ever before me, and as the night waxes and wanes, and I know the dreaded hour draws near and more near, I am worked up into the state of desperation that you sometimes see in nursing mothers when they can't get their babes to sleep—a state which induces them to try to do it by force, and makes them carry the refractory imp up and down the room in a frenzied manner, and rock it violently in their arms, and sing aloud to deaden its shrieking.

At last—is it possible? yes I am losing the

clearness of my perceptions—that last thought was very dreamy. I don't recollect the train of ideas that led to it; I was very nearly asleep. I am so glad that in my joy I wake up broad, broad, and find that

—day is breaking.

And I have not slumbered yet;

and, slumber or no slumber, I have to get up early.

At last, towards five o'clock—I am to rise at six—I go off into a profound, balmy, dreamless, perfect sleep, and am buried deep, deep in the downy bosom of the delicious goddess—I know Sleep was a goddess—the notion of any influence so sweet, and soothing, and loving, and tender being masculine!—when at my room I hear the hot water and the announcement—twice delivered—“Just gone six.”

I start up in bed and gaze about me blankly. “Gone six,” indeed! and what's that to me? How dare that woman—how dare anybody—come to my door and wake me with the terrific statement that it has “gone six,” when everybody knows that I never dream of allowing myself to be disturbed before half-past eight, in order that I may have time to get wide awake by a quarter to nine?

Suddenly, however, the sense of my calamity bursts upon me with overwhelming force, and I, blind and drunk with sleep, blunder out of bed into the middle of the room, and stand there for a moment dazed, bewildered, striving to collect my senses, and think what I am to do next. A bright idea strikes me. I will reverse the order of my ablutions, and instead of keeping my bath for their crowning joy and glory, I'll take it first.

Br-r-r—how cold it is! Not laving me with a gently stimulating freshness, not lending me new life and vigour, as it is wont to do, but striking into my very vitals with a sudden shock of cold. Well, it has wakened me, at all events. Let us see what the morning looks like. Ah! fine, I see; sunshiny—a very pretty sight, indeed, to go back to bed and dream about. But I can't go back to bed; I must go on with my dressing, for am I not getting up early? Water, instead of screeching hot, tepid—just one degree warmer than that I drank last night. Ha, pleasant—hot cold water, and cold hot water! Well, well, it's no use to grumble: once having made up your mind to get up early, you must make your account for every possible discomfort that can be heaped on your devoted head.

Well, now I am dressed, and what next awaits me? To think that I, who am wont to make my appearance in the breakfast-room at what hour it suits me, in what costume it suits me, in what mood it suits me, sure to find some little dainty dish prepared for me, crisp watercress, nice bread-and-butter, hot tea—I, accustomed for years to this mode of preparing for the labours of the day, am now, in full morning dress, to sally forth at half-past seven, and to walk three miles before breakfast!

I go down stairs; the shutters in the hall are

not taken down; I grope along in darkness, bring my shin in contact with some hard-edged object, and tumble prone over what proves to be a coal-scuttle. How it came there in July, I want to know; but there it is, and there am I, and after sprawling some moments among the coals, I get up, rub my smarting shin, brush off as much coal-dust as consents to be removed, and, casting a glance as I pass at the "banquet-hall deserted," which last night looked the picture of harmless conviviality, and which this morning looks the picture of disreputable sickly revolting dissipation, I open the door and pass out.

Cold again; that same searching cold that chilled me through and through in my bath: I wish I had put on something warmer; but if I had, I should be roasted before I got back! Look at those mists, lying asleep in the valley, or just awake enough to

Put forth an arm, and creep from pine to pine,
And loiter, slowly drawn.

Don't I know what is in those mists: haven't they sucked up fever, and ague, and diphtheria, and typhus, and rheumatism, and low fever, and Heaven knows what, from every low-lying pasture, and every marsh, and every fen, and are they not now laden and heavy and raw with such burdens, and are they not bearing them abroad and administering copious doses of them to every "passing villager?" And my way lies through that valley!

"Lovely morning!" says the voice of my friend who is to accompany me, and who has just joined me—"glorious morning!"

I used to think my friend had a cheery, pleasant voice; I never before detected anything insulting or derisive in it; now, it sounds envenomed: the more galling that it seeks to hide itself beneath an appearance of the frankest bonhomie.

I assent. What's the good of arguing the point?

"Are you not glad you got up?"

This is a little *too* much. Luckily, I am saved from quarrelling with my friend (which I should be sorry to be obliged to do) by the appearance of Rover and Stella, who have been let off the chain to accompany us. They are nice dogs, and I am proud of them, when dry and calm, as they are in the middle of the day; but now, what use do they make of their newly gained liberty? They roll themselves on the lawn, among the dew and the wormcasts, till they are soaking, and then they come, plunging, in loud wide-mouthed boisterousness, to leap on me, completing the effect of the coal-dust on my light-coloured summer costume.

Off we go, across wet fields that soak my boots through in the first five minutes, my friend striding along, singing, whistling, and talking to the dogs. I following, sick, silent, and savage, till my tormentor turns round, and remarks that "I seem out of sorts." I

Grin horrible a ghastly smile

by way of answer, for speak I cannot.

It is over, and I am back again—back in my room—I will not now stop to state in what condition of mind, body, or attire—back in my untidy and disordered room, everything at sixes and sevens just as I left it, and I have to set to to polish myself up for breakfast, and my boots are sodden with wet, and my stockings won't come off, except with tearing, and there's the breakfast-bell, and I'm not ready; no, nor anything the least like it, nor shall I be for the next half-hour at *least*, and, what's more, I shall not try to be.

Three-quarters of an hour later I make my appearance at the breakfast-table, to find cold tea, and tough sodden toast, and eggs that—and ham which—it doesn't signify, for I am much too sick and wretched to eat any of them, were they of the best.

But here the recollection of what next occurred still awakes in me sentiments I would rather not recal. I found that, instead of meeting with that soothing sympathy and tender consideration which my prolonged sufferings and exacerbated feelings demanded, I was made the subject of general mirth; that my friend had been amusing the assembled company with a highly-coloured facetious account of all I had endured in that dreadful, dreadful walk. And, can it be believed, that the hours of agony I had gone through in the night were made the subject, not only of comment, but of *complaint*, by a woman (I always hated that woman—I always felt she would do me an injury if the occasion served her, and I was right) who had not been obliged to leave her bed before nine o'clock!

"No wonder," she said—I see her red face now, and her projecting teeth and gums, from which the lips used to recede when she spoke or smiled, leaving them exposed in all their native hideousness—"no wonder you were unfit for an early walk, for I'm sure you were up half the night. I heard you over my head half a dozen times at least"—the reader will remember I only rose on two occasions—"and you woke me each time. I had a mind to take my umbrella and stand on a chair and tap on the ceiling to you."

It was lucky you didn't, I thought—uncommonly lucky you didn't. If you had, I should have overthrown every heavy article the room contained. I should have put on the thickest and most creaking boots I had, and paced to and fro at intervals all through the night. It would have been a relief to my feelings to have tortured you, that I only regret you did not suggest it by acting as you proposed.

I will not go through an account of the weary, listless, interminable day; of the slumberous, stupefied evening that followed that, in which I fell asleep in the midst of the delightful discourse of my dear old friend, arrived from town only just before dinner. I will not say how I struggled to listen; how I pulled up my eyelids by elevating my eyebrows to the utmost height, and fixed my eyes with a wide-open stare on the opposite wall; how I found

that pleasant face gradually fade and lose distinctness, and that full clear voice grow to sound monotonous and far off, and the words it spoke to become unintelligible; how I forced myself back every now and then into semi-consciousness, and tried to remember and take up the thread of the discourse, and talked egregious nonsense.

But the explanation that I had got up early sufficed to set matters all right with one, who never appears till the day is well aired, and who holds that it is inconsistent with the dignity of man to show himself before the world till his intellects are thoroughly awake, which, unless he puts them asleep at sundown, they can't be expected to be before a certain hour in the day.

That wise creature suggests that we shall take a turn in the garden this lovely night, and when once fairly out of the drawing-room, says:

"Now go to bed; there's nothing else for it, and take my advice and don't be induced, under any pretext short of direst necessity, to get up early. It's the destruction of mind and body; no constitution can stand up against it.

Dear Wisdom, it was of you that the story was related how, when your father, a worthy man but infected with ancient prejudices, knocked at your door, black in the morning, bidding you remember that the early bird got the early worm, you turned on your shoulder, replying, "Serve the worm right for being up first!" and went to sleep again.

So I go to bed; I undress, leisurely, soberly; I luxuriate in the thought that I have nothing to hurry me, nothing to put me out of my own beloved and tranquil routine. I am now, in the prospect of coming rest, just tired and sleepy enough to make it delightful to dawdle, and dream, and watch the waving of the white curtain by the open window, and the sailing moon, and to follow the course of a ghostly moth flitting past, just visible when the light of my lamp falls on it, then again silently swallowed up in the darkness from which it momentarily emerges.

Then to bed—so sleepy—so sweetly, happily, luxuriously, childishly sleepy! Good night! I forgive everybody—even the woman with—who?—ah, yes, with the gums—good night—I am ne-ever going to get up early any more.

THE GOLDEN BEE.

PART I.

I.

LADEN with precious merchandise, the growth of Chinese toil,
And costly work of Chinese hands, the patient wealth of toil,
Over the wave with outspread sails, like white-winged bird at sea,
Swiftly, gaily, homeward bound, sped on the Golden Bee.

II.

Stored with such peachy-textured silks as shimmer in the sun,
With countless rainbow-tinted gleams and never keep to one—

Silks to burnish Beauty's self with a new resplendent ray,
Silks an English queen might wear on her coronation day.

III.

She had chests of fragrant tea-leaves to make social household boards,
Or to be the one sweet luxury of widows' scanty hoards;
With grotesque and dainty ivories, carved by coarse-grained hands,
For idle money-spenders in rich European lands.

IV.

Cloudless the sky—fresh blew the breeze—the Captain's heart was light,
As on the deck he lingered late and watched the coming night;
If sweet the journey homeward from an unpropitious sail,
'Tis sweeter still where Fortune smiles in port and sea and gale.

V.

Blithe was the Captain's gallant heart, for things had prospered well,
Soon should he reach his home on shore with much good news to tell;
Good news for his Parsee merchants, and for the fair young wife,
Whose sweet affection made the joy and beauty of his life.

VI.

Soon should he kiss his bonnie boy, and hold him on his knee,
Awhile he'd listen eager-eyed to stories of the sea;
Soon should he kiss his latest-born, and then the Captain smiled,
Smiled father-like to think of her, his little unseen child.

VII.

A tear ran down his sunburnt cheek, a mild joy lit his eye—
So sweet were thoughts of love and home—so near they seemed to lie;
Whilst through his great, rough heart diffused such pure and soft delight,
As like an even song of praise went up to heaven's height.

VIII.

One by one upon the waves twinkled every rising star,
And Dian trailed her golden hair over the deep afar;
Whilst lonely o'er the vastness of that solitary sea,
Glided, as on feathered feet, the good ship Golden Bee.

IX.

Hark! what terrific cry was that of horror and affright,
Which broke like some tempestuous sound the stillness of the night,
Rousing the crew from rest and sleep to tremble with dismay,
Waking the Captain's sunny dreams of harbour far away?

X.

Oh, Captain, wake! 'Tis but a dream—the harbour is not won,
Thou dost not clasp thy Mary's hand, or kiss thy little son;
Thy baby sweetly sleeps ashore—that shore is far from thee—
Oh, Captain, wake! for none but God can save thy Golden Bee.

XI.

"Fire!" 'twas an awful sound to hear on solitary
seas,
With double danger in the breath of every fresh'ning
breeze;
An awful sight it was to see the vessel all alight,
As if a blazing meteor dropped into the darksome
night.

XII.

Foremost and calm amid his crew the Captain gave
command,
Nor backward in a moment's need to help with skill-
ful hand,
Awhile the courage in his voice and firmness on his
brow
Imparted strength and hope to hearts which ne'er
had drooped till now.

XIII.

Three days, three nights, the vessel burned; oh,
Heavens! 'twas strange to be
Mid fire unquenchable with all the waters of the
sea!
But neither skill nor strength availed: the fatal
breezes blew,
Death and destruction, fiery-winged, threatened the
gallant crew.

XIV.

And all was lost. Those gorgeous silks would sweep
no palace now,
Those ivory fans would never feign a breeze to
beauty's brow;
The aromatic leaf could soothe no weary student's
brain,
Or freshen lips in fever heats upon the bed of pain.

XV.

"Get out the boat!" with firm quick voice the short
command was said,
And no man spoke, but straight and swift the order
was obeyed;
Then one by one the crew stepped forth—but all
looked back with tears,
Upon the bonnie Golden Bee, their home of many
years.

XVI.

But first the Captain snatched from flame, and pressed
within his breast,
A relic of departed days, of all his heart loved best:
A little Prayer-book, well-worn now, a gift in early
life,
Sweet token from his early love ere yet he called her
wife.

XVII.

And quick as falls a lightning shaft, when thunder
is behind,
A thousand recollected joys flashed o'er his troubled
mind;
Of happy, happy courtship days, and later, still more
sweet,
The tranquil joys of married life, the sound of baby
feet.

XVIII.

Amid a death-like silence of breeze and sky and
sea,
Beneath a burning noonday sun they left the Golden
Bee;
And when they saw the blackened wreck totter amid
the foam,
Each sailor breathed a prayer to God, and thought
of wife and home.

XIX.

Then out upon a lonely sea, six hundred miles from
land,
The solitary boat sailed forth with that courageous
band;
Sailed forth as drifts a withered leaf upon the surg-
ing tide,
With only hope to be their strength, and only God as
guide.

XX.

No white sail specked the arid sky, no cloud or
shadow came,
To cool that blue abyss of air which seemed to be a
flame;
No breeze sprang up to aid their oars, no friendly
ray of light,
Of moon or star shone out to guide their dreary path
at night.

XXI.

Oh! God, it was a fearful thing to float and drift
away,
Upon so wide a wilderness, day after weary day,
With meagre store of food and drink which, ere two
days had rolled,
They measured out as never yet a miser did his
gold.

XXII.

"Oh, Captain!" cried a sailor boy, "I ran away
to sea,
And well I know my mother's heart has sorely
grieved for me;
Will some one take my parting love?—I shall not
reach the shore."
And then he smiled a saintly smile, nor smiled nor
spoke no more.

XXIII.

Then tenderly, with bare brown hands, his comrades
did prepare
A humble shroud, and wrapp'd him in with more
than woman's care.
And all stood up and bared their heads, awhile the
Captain read
The Church of England's requiem over its ransomed
dead.

XXIV.

The red sun dipp'd into the sea, and lit the west afar,
The crimson clouds paled one by one, beneath the
evening star;
A calm of even-tide enwrapp'd both breeze and sky
and wave,
When in God's great cathedral vault the sailor found
a grave.

XXV.

They wept no more—but, silent, stood and watched
the placid deep;
Thinking with wistful hearts of him who slept such
blessed sleep.
And one—a gaunt and giant man—sent forth a
bitter cry,
And clenched his hand, and shrieked aloud, "Oh,
master, let us die!"

XXVI.

Oh, let us die! The words rang forth through the
sweet summer air,
As if a mad and tortured soul breathed out its last
wild prayer.
They sounded far athwart the sea, and up into the
sky,
Till even silence seemed to make the echo, "Let us
die!"

XXVII.

Then rose the Captain, sternly sad, and where the sun had set,
He waved one hand, and cried in tones which could command them yet:

"Oh, comrades! will you see *His* works, and doubt that he can still
Save e'en in the eleventh hour, if such should be *His* will?"

XXVIII.

"Oh, whilst there's life, despair not! Have we mothers, children, wives?
Does not *their* memory give us all the strength of double lives?

Mind ye not how the widow's cruse, though wasted, filled again:
We've yet the widow's God o'erhead, and yet a little grain.

XXIX.

"Oh! tender wives, who live for us, our hearts consent to take
A little hope, a little faith, for your beloved sake.
Oh! children of our dearest love! oh, pleasant home ashore!
Our souls can brave a thousand deaths to call ye ours once more!"

PART II.

I.

WHERE palaces of merchant kings in marbled splendour rise—
And gleam beneath the burning blue of fair Calcutta's skies—
Where orange groves and myrtle bowers weigh down the sultry air,
The Captain's fair young wife abode, and watched his coming there.

II.

She never heard the billows roar, or saw a ship at sea,
Without a thought of those who steered the bonnie Golden Bee;
She never kissed her babes at night, or woke at dawn of day,
Without a prayer that God would speed her sailor on his way.

III.

One night rose up a fierce monsoon, and with a sudden roar,
Startled the waves from twilight rest, and dashed against the shore;
Where at night long they shrieked and wailed, and sobbing sunk to sleep,
As dying groans of shipwrecked men fade on the silent deep.

IV.

The Captain's babes serenely slept, and through the tempest smiled,
As sweet forget-me-nots bloom fair amid an Alpine wild;
The mother, weeping, clasped her hands, and, pacing to and fro,
Prayed, with a white-faced misery, in murmurs faint and low.

V.

"Oh! husband, art thou safe ashore, or shipwrecked on the coast,
And do the wild waves bring from far thy drowning voice to me?
Oh! father of my sleeping babes 'tis hard that thou must bear
Dangers unspeakable, which I, thy own wife, may not share.

VI.

"Oh, God! who mid ten thousand worlds has fixed thy glorious seat,
And cares for every human heart that worships at thy feet,
Pity my happy, helpless babes—my watchful agony,
And guide my husband's precious life in safety back to me."

VII.

Days glided by, and brought the time when every ship might be
That one for which her soul was sick of wistfulness to see;
Days grew to weeks, and still she watched, and hoped, and prayed the same,
For the Golden Bee's safe advent, which never, never came.

VIII.

Then rose a morn, when hope grew faint, within her patient heart,
When every sudden voice, or step, would make her pale and start,
With some deep undefined fear, that brought no words or tears,
But worked upon her maiden cheeks, the furrowed grief of years.

IX.

Ah, me! the sailor's lot was hard, to drift upon the waves,
Which yawned beneath the tempest's breath, and showed a thousand graves;
With scarce a hope of seeing wife or children any more,—
But oh! the woman's part was worst, to wait, and weep ashore!

X.

She held her children to her heart, and prayed without a word
(Ofttimes the heart's unspoken prayer by Heaven is soonest heard);
And if they heedless played or slept, the passion of her grief
Would spend itself in wailing tears, which brought her no relief.

XI.

Then, as a soft and tranquil day follows a night of rain,
And drooping flowers will feel the sun, and open their leaves again,
For sweetest sake of feeble babes, no helper by save One,
She learned to lead a widowed life, and say, "Thy will be done."

XII.

One night the moon escaped from clouds, and with a pale light gleamed
Over the sea, which felt the glow, and murmured as it dreamed;
Her bright boy cradled at her feet, her baby on her breast,
She sung her evening cradle song, and hushed the pair to rest.

XIII.

And with the heaven's tranquil light upon her golden hair,
The mother's love within her eyes—eyes that were still so fair;
She looked like some Madonna, of antique Italian art,
Such as breathe the whole religion of the painter's pious heart.

XIV.

Awlike the elder child still drowsed, and like a dove
in June,
Cooed from his little downy nest unto his mother's
tune,
A ship that bore a foreign flag rode calmly with the
tide,
And dropp'd its anchor in the port, by the fair city's
side.

XV.

Before the mother's voice had ceased its chanting,
fond and sweet,
A distant footstep echoed through the silence of the
street;
And when the boy's blue dreamy eyes sought for
her face no more,
A shadow flecked the window panes, and paused
without the door.

XVI.

A shadow of a human form, but oh, so white and
wan!
As if the strong vitality of manhood must be gone;
Then came a low breathed, tender voice, it only mur-
mured "Wife!"
And heart to heart the two were clasped, called back
to new glad life.

XVII.

For hours they hardly spoke a word, but shedding
blessed tears,
Poured out their prayers of thankfulness to One who
always hears;
Those tears fell on their sleeping babes. O children,
ye receive
Such pure baptismal rite as Church or Priesthood
ere can give.

TIMOUR THE TARTAR.

BEFORE Shakespeare was, Tamburlaine stormed
lustily through Marlowe's mighty line. I hear the
people of old England shouting in the open yard
or pit, and see the exquisites as they sit on the
rushes of the sceneless stage, brighten into en-
thusiasm as Tamburlaine that sturdy Scythian
thief—"perhaps not altogether so famous in his
own country of Tartaria as in England"—enters
among them in his copper-laced coat, and crimson
velvet breeches, on a chariot drawn by harnessed
kings with reins in their mouths, and a whip
flourishing over their backs. He cracks his
whip, and almost cracks his throat, as he enters
with his shout,

"Holla! Ye pampered jades of Asia!

What, can ye draw but twenty miles a day,
And have so proud a chariot at your heels,
And such a coachman as great Tamburlaine?"

And peace to thy soul, dear Mat Lewis! didst
thou not teach my infant lips to lisp magnilo-
quence, what time the fame of Timour the
Tartar from the boards of Covent Garden, spread
to toyshops and survived in nurseries? How
was the pasteboard Timour agitated, as a piping
childish voice exclaimed, "With the blood of
their chiefs have I deluged my scaffolds; with
the blaze of their burning towns have I crim-
soned the heavens; and have I still left them
spirit enough to groan? Go! bear my orders
for instant vengeance—to death with the assas-
sins!"

Delicious nursery theatricals! Now-a-days
children never approach in dreams to the delight
of cutting out grand tournaments in cardboard,
and mounting caves and fortresses upon a mimic
stage. Alas, that the days are gone when Zorilda
the Amazon, weighing together with her mag-
nificent courser very much under half an ounce,
was my beloved; when with lavish hand I gave
Timour himself, decorations of gold stars and
silver crescents on his crimson fly, and yellow
satin shirt, his red trousers and his green boots,
his turban and his dagger. He cost me an
entire halfpennyworth of those little mixed
spangles which no toymen sells for the use of
the small generation that now is.

I was yesterday at Timour's court again,
having gone thither, travelling by the last
volume of the publications of the Hakluyt
Society, in company with an old Spanish knight,
named Ruy Gonzalez de Clavijo. He was sent
by Henry the Third of Castile upon an embassy
of compliment and observation, to the presence
of the earth-shaking Tartar, when his power had
attained the highest pitch. It was a little while
before he died, a frostbitten old man, on his way
to the empire of China, which he was on the
point of adding to his own estate. The Spirit
of Winter met him then, says Ahmed ben Arab-
shah, one of his old Eastern biographers, and
talked to him in his own vein, thus: "Halt in
thy swift career, false tyrant! How long art thou
to run as fire over a wailing world? We are both
old, both of us bind with chains. Root up men's
homes, make the earth cold, and then learn that
my blast is colder. Against thy countless bands,
that vex and kill, I set my army of wintry days,
that also are destroyers; and by the Lord that
liveth, I will have no mercy upon thee! With
my fury thou shalt be encompassed. All the
fire thou kindest shall not save thee from the
gripe of the cold howling tempest and the ice
cold death." Mat Lewis should have intro-
duced that Spirit of Winter in the last scene of
his melodrama.

Ruy Gonzalez de Clavijo was a knight and a
teetotaler, who ventured to drink water at the
feasts of Timour himself, when his whole court,
his wives, and the great Tartar himself, in-
dulged in potations pottle deep. As an early
traveller, he joins the company of Marco Polo
and our own Sir John Mandeville. His com-
panions were, a knight of Madrid, a Master
of Theology, a return envoy of Timour's who
had come to Spain with two Spanish ambassadors
previously sent to observe politics in the East,
who had happened to be present at the battle in
which Timour overthrew the great Turk, Bajazet.
Clavijo was a conscientious man, who knew how
to astonish Timour with great Spanish braggadocio
that should not be untrue. "There is a
bridge," he said, "in Spain, forty miles broad,
on which a thousand head of sheep find pas-
ture." Timour opened his eyes, but the cunning
knight had in his mind the land under which the
Guadiana dips. "There are a lion and a bull in
Spain fed daily by the milk of many cows." He
meant the cities of Leon and Toro. "There

are three wolf-dogs (canes) which fight in the field, each with three hundred lances." Timour whistled. The knight had in his mind three towns named Can de Roa, Can de Mufio, and Can de Zurita. "There is a town in Spain surrounded by fire and built upon water." "Is there indeed," says Timour. "To be sure there is," thinks Ruy Clavijo. "Do not the springs bubble up from the ground in Madrid, and is not that chief city among cities, begirt with walls of fire flint? Go to, then: I am telling this barbarian no lies."

Before we start with the judicious knight, we will get from his English editor and translator, Mr. Clements Markham, a few notes on the true history of Timour the Tartar. That hero left his own Memoirs written for the edification of posterity, as well as a volume of Institutes. Ruy Clavijo found in Timour's native town, while Timour himself lived, the common report that this great vanquisher of kings, though of a noble family, set out but poorly furnished with the world's goods, and acquired his name of Tamerlane—which is, by interpretation, Timour-lame—from a wound in the leg that a shepherd gave him when he was sheep-stealing. Tamburlaine, therefore, was a nickname that none would have dared to employ in the presence of this Sultan Kamran Ameer Kutb-ud-Deen Timour Kurkhan Sahib Keraun: all which, when turned into English, means the Lord Successful Commander Pole-star-of-the-Faith, Earth-shaker (that is Timour), Of-the-Lineage-of-Sovereigns, Master-of-the-Grand-Conjunctions—meaning those of the planets, not the parts of speech.

Timour himself, with proper family pride, says that he inherited of his father an incalculable number of sheep and goats, cattle and servants. He was born in the green and flowery town of Kesh, one of a race of shepherds wandering much and living under tents. "At twelve years of age," he says, "I fancied I perceived in myself all the signs of greatness and wisdom, and whoever came to visit me, I received with great haughtiness and dignity." At eighteen he rode, hunted, read the Koran, and played chess. To the last he was a great chess-player; and, for his own better contentment, added more pieces to the board, in order to increase the intricacy of the game. As he approached manhood, he left off chess-playing, and made a vow never to injure any living creature. Once, when he had trodden upon an ant, he was so deeply grieved, that he felt as if his foot had lost its power. But, having returned to his chess-playing both on the little board and on the great board of the world, he lived to crush under his foot thousands and thousands of men, without more tender concern than he might feel for the grains of sand on which he trampled in the desert.

At the age of twenty, Timour received from his father, certain tents, sheep, camels, and servants; married the granddaughter of the ruler of his tribe of Berlas, a lady who was his faithful companion on the wild and perilous ascent to supreme power; and presently plunged into

all the anarchy of Asiatic politics, where power was always to the strong and the unscrupulous. Once, when his other comrades had been slaughtered, he was reduced to the company of his wife and seven surviving followers, in the desert of Khiva. A shepherd gave to the fugitives part of a goat, which they roasted between stones, and, says Timour, "we enjoyed ourselves exceedingly." "Surely," said Hen Aljay Turkhan Aga, the devoted wife, "surely our fortunes are now arrived at the lowest point." But after a few weeks' wandering, a lower point was touched, when Timour and his wife, seized by a troop of wild Toorkmans, were confined for two months in a wretched cow-house full of fleas and other vermin. From that point, the tide turned which bore the adventurer up to his high flood as lord of Asia.

He was a man who made his way by going to war for an idea. "If," he says in his Institutes, "in any kingdom, tyranny and oppression and iniquity shall prevail, it is the duty of a prince, from a respect to justice and the law, to expel and extirpate the authors of that iniquity and to assault that kingdom. It is the duty of a victorious king to bring under his authority every kingdom where the people are oppressed by their rulers. Thus I have delivered Khorassan, and purified the kingdoms of Pers, and Irak, and Shaum."

Now let us travel to him in the train of Ruy Clavijo. We embark in a carrack at the port of St. Mary, near Cadiz, with our train and with the marvellously pictured tapestry, the falcons and the other gifts that we take with us from the King of Spain to the great Tartar. Clavijo describes all the places visited upon the way. For us, silence is easy till we reach Constantinople, rich in relics, upon which the pious traveller dwells with all the sincere faith that characterised the reports of Sir John Mandeville concerning relics in the Holy Land. Among other marvels, there was, in a convent of old ladies called Omnipotens, "a stone of many colours, on which it was said that our Lord was placed when He was taken down from the cross. On it were the tears of the three Marys . . . and these tears looked fresh, as if they had just fallen." We leave Cadiz in May of the year fourteen hundred and three, and it is Tuesday, the thirteenth of November, before we can find at Pera a vessel willing to brave the wintry storms of the Black Sea in taking us along its southern coast to Trebizond. On Wednesday, at the hour of mass, we make sail in a galiot commanded by a Genoese, the carrack bearing company. In the middle of the night we enter the great sea and push on, hugging the shore. On Friday night, in one of the wild storms which this sea brews to perfection, the carrack is a wreck ashore, and the galiot also is aground. In the lulls of the tempest, Timour's presents are landed and piled in a heap beside the wild waves. Very soon after that is done, the galiot goes to pieces. We find another carrack that will take us back to Pera; and, after an absence of eight days, we re-enter that city. There we remain

all the winter, for no sailor will peril a ship because we are in haste. But on the approach of spring, we have secured and armed a galiot of nineteen pair of oars, and, hoping to reach Timour's winter quarters before he has left them, ours is the first vessel that, on the approach of spring, ventures into the great sea. On Friday, the eleventh of April, we reach Trebizond.

We push on, after a fortnight's detention in this city: necessary, because here we prepare for the long land journey that lies before us. On Saturday, the twenty-sixth of April, we set out again, and come, on Wednesday, to a part of the road where the way is through a narrow pass with a river on one side, and on the other side a high rock with a castle full of thieves upon its top. Here is toll taken, and at vespers we are at the foot of a castle on a high hill, called Dorile, where the lord of the country lives. That worthy comes to us, accompanied with thirty mounted bowmen. He sits with us graciously, and tells us that we see how poor the land is; clearly he must depend for his living upon what is given him by travellers, or plundered from his neighbours. He is told all about his master at Trebizond, vassal of Timour Beg, to whom we are ambassadors. "Yes," he says, "that is true; but we have nothing to live on, therefore you must give what we demand." Our ambassadors offer him scarlet and fine linen, and a silver cup. He requires more, and answers to fair speeches that words are worth nothing. But for another piece of camlet, he provides us with a guard of ten men as far as the land of Assinga, which belongs to Timour.

Here, the return envoy from Timour, who has been thus far a quiet comrade, and who wears a Spanish suit of clothes, becomes a person in authority, and bursts into activity. At every town we enter, he commands of the people food, horses, and men, "and if they do not come, the people receive such a number of blows with sticks and whips that it is quite wonderful. Thus the people of these towns are so severely punished that they fly when they see a Zagatay coming. A Zagatay is a man in the host of Timour Beg of noble lineage." Carpets are brought out of every house, that we may sit on them, and before them are placed pieces of leather upon which the food is laid that they bring out for us to eat.

On Thursday, the fifteenth of May, we travel on, and on the following Sunday week sleep in the Town of Madmen, which is inhabited by Moorish hermits called Caxixes, who shave their beards and their heads, wear rags, and go about singing day and night with timbrels. On Thursday, the twenty-ninth of May, we reach the great city called Calmarin, from which, at a distance of six leagues, we see the great mountain on which the ark of Noah rested. This city of Calmarin was the first city that was built in the world, after the Flood. Next day, we come to a castle on the top of a rock, belonging to a widow lady, who paid tribute for it to Timour. Her husband had

been a robber chief, and when Timour had killed him, before giving possession to his wife he caused the castle doors to be pulled off, and ordered that they never should be replaced, in order that no malefactors might be again able there to defend themselves. On Saturday the road passed at the foot of Ararat, and here were the league-long ruins of a city, of which also the people of the region said that it was the first built after the Flood. So, on by rock, castle, and plain, sleeping sometimes in the plain near tents of the wandering Zagatays, until we come to the city of Khoi, where the land of Upper Armenia ends, and the land of Persia commences. Here, we find an ambassador to Timour from the Sultan of Babylon, who had sent with him twenty horses and fifteen camels laden with presents, besides six rare birds and a giraffe.

The heat now was so great, that we could not travel in the daytime, and the insects were such as the beasts could not endure, so that there came from them so much blood, that it was quite wonderful. But on Midsummer-day we were met by a messenger from the eldest son of the lord Timour, desiring us to ride as fast as we could to a plain where he was encamped.

Two leagues beyond Teheran, we passed a great city in ruins, once the largest in the land. We were feasted on the road, according to the custom of the land, with horses roasted and their tripe boiled, the ambassadors receiving many gifts of robes and horses. Gifts had to be presented in return. A favourite grandson of Timour's, who was passed on the way, begged one of the falcons we were carrying, and it was given to him.

The hot wind blew as from a world on fire upon the day of our coming to Damghan, in the province of Media. Outside this city, were two towers, so high that a man could scarcely throw a stone to the top of them. They were made of mud and the heads of men; and there were two other such towers fallen to the ground. The heads were those of the White Tartars whom Timour had defeated and killed. He ordered that these four towers should be built of their heads, plastered together with mud. He also ordered that every White Tartar, wherever he might be found, should be put to death, and so it was done. Along the roads, in one place ten, and in another twenty, of their bodies might be seen. The people of the city say that they often see lights burning on the top of those towers in the night.

Travelling by night because of the great heat, all of us greatly wearied and some very ill, we came, on Sunday, the twentieth of July, to the city of Vascal, where a great knight waited, by order of Timour, to do us honour. He desired us to come to him after dinner. We replied that we could not walk, and trusted that he would excuse us, but he sent again to say that we should come. Horses were then sent to us, with word that we should proceed on our journey, as it was the command of the great lord Timour that we should follow him as quickly as possible, by night

and by day. We answered that we should prefer to rest for two days, but were told that we must not stay any longer, for if the lord should know of it this knight would lose his head. The ambassadors were so ill that they were more dead than alive; but the knight caused soft pillows to be placed on the bows of their saddles, and so we departed. Wherever we arrived, plenty of meat was given us, and fresh horses, and we set out again with the knight who had been sent to conduct us. The great lord had horses waiting at the end of each day's journey, at some places one hundred, and at others two hundred; and thus the posts were arranged on the road as far as Samarcand. Those whom Timour sent in any direction, or who were sent to him, went on these horses, as fast as they could, day and night. He also had horses placed in deserts and uninhabited districts, as well as in places that were populous; and he caused great houses to be built in uninhabited places, where horses and provisions were supplied by the nearest towns and villages. By command of Timour Beg, any man met on the road who refused to give up his horse when wanted by one travelling to or from the great lord, lost his head. There were messengers, also, on all the roads, so that news could come in a few days from every province. The lord is better pleased with one who travels a day and night for fifty leagues and kills two horses, than with him who does the distance in three days. When horses are knocked up, they kill and sell them for meat, if they are in an inhabited country; but we found many dead horses on the road, which had been killed by hard riding. We travelled day and night, no rest being permitted, and, although it was night, the heat was so great that it was quite wonderful, and there was hot and burning wind. Gomez de Salazar was nearly dying, and there was no water on the road. At last we left him behind in a village, very ill, as he could not travel any longer. A litter was afterwards sent to carry him to the city of Nishapore, where he died in a good house, attended by the best doctors.

At Nishapore, the ambassadors found another knight, who had been sent by the great lord Timour to do them honour, and to hurry them as much as possible. We went on, therefore, and whenever we arrived at any village or town, the first man met in the street was taken, and forced with many blows to guide us to the house of the chief. The people, when they saw the troops of Timour Beg, ran away in horror, and those who were behind their shops selling merchandise, shut them up, and fled into their houses. The chief of the place, being brought before these knights, received a wonderful number of blows and whippings, and was threatened that he should pay dearly because everything was not ready, of food, fruits, and fodder, for the ambassadors, their train, and horses.

Over the hot deserts we at last came to the river Oxus, and crossed the bridge which was built for Timour's army before it was destroyed after him, as he had given orders. None can cross over the Oxus out of Samarcand, by means

of the ferry-boat which is the only passage, without a pass; but any one may enter. This is to prevent escape of prisoners. Because the lord has brought many captives into Samarcand from the countries which he has conquered, to people and enrich the land. (Though, when the ambassadors passed, they found orphans and women without support in the land of Persia and Khorassan, yet the men had been taken by force—above one hundred thousand persons—to the land of Samarcand.) As we travelled onward, an attendant, who had been very ill, departed this life, and on Thursday, the twenty-eighth of August, we arrived at the city of Kesh, in a green watered plain. The lord Timour Beg and his father were both natives of this city. Here, was a great mosque being built by Timour for his own body, and in it the lord gives twenty boiled sheep every day for the souls of his father and son who lie buried there. We stayed in Kesh, one day, during which we were shown the magnificence of Timour's palaces. We then departed, and when we were within a league of the city of Samarcand, halted, while one of the knights went forward to announce our approach to the great lord.

Next day at dawn, he returned with a command that the ambassadors, and the ambassador of the Sultan of Babylon who travelled with them, should be taken to a garden near the village, and should remain there until he gave further orders. On the fourth of September, word was brought that Timour was occupied with ambassadors from the Emperor Tokatnish, and could not see us yet; but that we might not be impatient, he had sent us wherewith to make merry. Many cooked sheep and a roasted horse. It is the custom not to see any ambassador until five or six days are passed, and the more important he is, the longer he has to wait.

On Monday, the eighth of September, we went over a plain covered with houses, gardens, and markets, to a large garden and palace outside the city of Samarcand, where the lord Timour was. Having dismounted, we went into an outer building, where two knights came to take our presents and place them in the arms of men who were to carry them respectfully before the mighty chief. We then entered the garden under a broad high portal covered with tiles glazed in blue and gold, and came to six elephants with men in wooden castles on their backs. The two knights, as we approached Timour Beg, held the ambassadors under the armpits, and Timour's return envoy was with them—much laughed at because he wore his Spanish dress. The ambassadors were conducted to an old knight in an ante-room, before whom they bowed reverentially. He was the son of a sister of Timour Beg. They were then brought before some small boys, Timour's grandsons, and bowed also before them. To one of these boys they gave up the letter sent to Timour by the King of Castile. The three boys carried the letter, and the ambassadors were then brought before Timour himself.

They found him, in the porch of a beautiful

palace sitting on the ground. Before him was a fountain, which threw up the water very high, and in it there were some red apples. He could not see them until, always being held under the armpits, they had approached very close with their obeisances, for he was so old that his eyelids had fallen down entirely. His age was sixty-seven. He sat cross-legged among round pillows upon silken carpets, dressed in a silk robe, and with a high white hat on his head surmounted by a spinal ruby set in pearls and precious stones. He did not give his hand to kiss, for none are privileged to kiss him, but he said, "How is my son, the king? Is he in good health?" Presently turning to his court, he said, "Behold! here are the ambassadors sent by my son the King of Spain, who is the greatest king of the Franks, and lives at the end of the world. These Franks are truly a great people, and I will give my benediction to the King of Spain, my son."

At the royal feast which followed, our ambassadors sat above the ambassador of the pig Emperor of Cathay, to whom Timour was then refusing tribute, and whom, afterwards, he was setting out to conquer when the dead winter hugged him in her chill embrace. Cooked sheep and roasted horses, laid upon large round pieces of stamped leather, were dragged to and fro, with noise and strain of men, and cut up by the carvers, kneeling on the leather. Of the basins of food given to the guests, it was demanded that whatever was not eaten should be carried away. There was placed before the ambassadors, victual enough for half a year. After the roast and boiled, came made dishes of meat, and balls of forced meat; then followed fruit, with wine in gold and silver jugs, and sugar and cream: which the knight Clavijo, who abstained from wine, looked upon as a delicious summer drink.

Timour passed from garden to garden, and at each reception of the ambassadors he was found in a new place, surrounded by yet more magnificence. Once, there was wine sent to us before the feast, with orders to drink before starting, that we might be jovial when we arrived. Always, our meat was horse and sheep. The most honourable meat is haunch of horse; tripe of the horse, and sheep's heads, are also much regarded.

At last, Timour the Tartar camped in a great silken pavilion which from a distance looked like a castle, and it was in the midst of the tents of his army. A seven years' war was but just ended. After so long absence Timour was returned to Samarcand, and the marriages of two of his grandsons were being celebrated. The great lord's wives and his sons' wives gave drinking parties, sitting in the doorways of their tents with rows of wine jars, and of jars of cream and sugar set before them. Caño, the wife of Timour, would not believe that Clavijo was a man who never tasted wine. She desired to see men fall down drunk before her, and this only proved to her that she was in jovial company. The great ladies—who wear so much white lead on their faces that they look like

paper—ate their roasted sheep and horse with much noise, snatching the pieces away from one another, and so making game over their food. When Timour's chief wife is full-dressed, three ladies hold her head-dress with their hands that it may not fall on one side. For the sake of more merriment, Timour sent orders to Samarcand that all the traders in the city, the cooks and butchers, bakers and shoemakers, and all other people in the city, should come to the plain, sell their goods in the camp, and amuse his soldiers. In the place where the traders pitched their tents, he also ordered to be set up a great number of gallows, and hanged many great men. A councillor asked for his pardon if he paid four hundred thousand bezants of silver. The lord Timour approved of this, and when the man had given all he had, he was tormented to give more, and as he had no more, he was hung up by the feet until he was dead.

Travelling in company with Ray Gonzalez de Clavijo, I have told the tale of our travel very much in that brave knight's own phraseology. He has brought me to the true old Timour the Tartar of my youth. Timour fell sick, and the Spanish ambassadors were sent home summarily over the deserts and over the seas, without letter or message to their master. As for the hospitality shown to them when they appeared among Timour's servants as witnesses from the end of the world to the extent of the great Tartar's fame, Ali of Yezd is explanatory when he mentions that they were invited to the grand festivities within the camp; "for," he says, "even the smallest of fish have their places in the sea."

THE PRECINCT.

EVERY one has his separate, and generally his secret, ideal of perfect felicity. Baucis and Philemon had theirs. The sailor wanted "all the baccy in the world," and then "more baccy," to make him completely happy. M. Gavarni, the admirable *débardeur*-draughtsman, sighs after the discovery of aerial navigation. The captain in a marching regiment, with nothing but his pay to live on, beholds the acme of contentment in a staff appointment. The usher dreams of a seventh heaven of independent schoolmastership. To the fine lady, happiness must mean a dress or a bonnet which her inferiors will not copy, and consequently vulgarise as a fashion. To the minister, happiness must be parliament without her Majesty's opposition. There is something that will make a young ballet-girl much more joyous than will the possession of diamonds, or a brougham, or a Blenheim spaniel; and that is to be allowed to speak some "lines," however few in number. The happiest man in the world, according to the Eastern apologue, was he who had no shirt. Charles Lamb said that were he not a gentleman he should dearly like to be a beggar; and I once heard of a young rustic—one of those ploughboy philosophers so happily delineated by Mr. Hunt—who, being asked his

notion of supreme happiness, made answer that it was to "sit on a ztile and eat pancake edges!" There is much wealth of covetous imagination in eating only the crisp "edges" of the Shrove Tuesday delicacies and throwing the flabby centres away. Under the influence of metempsychosis this Alnaschar in a smock-frock, might have been a Cleopatra, and quaffed a solution of pearls in toilet-vinegar.

"I've often wished that I had clear"—any one can quote the rest: the five hundred pounds a year, the river at the garden's end, the handsome accommodation for a friend, the friend himself and the bottle to give him—the ripe old port with the green seal, laid down, Consule Manlio, when Sir Claudius Hunter was Lord Mayor. I have had many ideals of happiness; have constructed on cobweb foundations many Spanish castles with "Here the Lares delight to dwell" sculptured over the barbicans thereof. To wear a tail-coat, to see one's name in print, to hear a famous orator, author, artist speak, to eat an ice in St. Mark's Place, Venice, to possess a library, a picture by Ostade, to see Taglioni dance: I, you, and thousands have longed for these things, and, being gratified in Time's good time, have begun straightway to long for something else. I have a fanciful ambition, now. I should like exceedingly to have a moderate independence, to have nothing to do, to be perfectly unknown to the publishers of books, the printers of newspapers, and those that carry proof sheets to and fro, and to live in the PRECINCT.

It is the most retired spot, this Precinct, in London. More retired than Austin Friars, than America-square, than Great St. Helen's, than St. Alban's-place, than Whitehall-yard, than the Albany, than Eel-Pie Island, than Fig-tree-court, than Paul's-chain, than Drapers' Hall Gardens, than Exeter-change, than the Magazine in Hyde Park, than Bell-square, Finsbury, or than Well-walk, Hampstead, on a winter Sunday. It is completely out of the world, although on the very skirt and verge and hem of the roaring world of London. It is at least a century and a half behind the time, notwithstanding the modern "improvements" that have encroached on its antiquity, and the modern trades and avocations that are carried on within its boundaries. It has its own laws, its own population, its own amusements. It might be five thousand miles away from London. It might be Juan Fernandez, or Norfolk Island, or Key West, or the Isola Bella, and it is but five minutes' walk from Temple-bar, to the east, and eight from Charing-cross, to the west. And its name is—the Precinct. Concerning its characteristics I may be explicit, with regard to its exact locality I must be cautious. All men are not, at once, to be made free of the Precinct. It has its mysteries, its pass-words and its counter-signs. You would not believe me were I to tell you that it is a province in the kingdom of Cockaigne and the realms of Prester John; that there are giants in the Precinct; that the pigs run about, their backs embrowned into crackling, knives and forks stuck in them, and crying

"Come, eat us!" and that when the sky falls—a feat it accomplishes sometimes, tumbling straight on the heads of the Precinctians—larks, ready-roasted, are to be had for the picking up. Such statements you would deride as fabulous; but I may claim more credence when I whisper that the Precinct is extra-parochial and is royal property, that it has its own famous and ancient little church, that it is bounded on the south by one of the noblest rivers and certainly the dirtiest river in the world, and on the north by a mile-long thoroughfare, once dignified as the site of the palaces of a Duke of Buckingham, and some earls of Essex, Durham, Salisbury and Arundel, to say nothing of the Lords of Burleigh over the way, or the still existent, lion-capped mansion of the Percys; once enlivened by the presence of a maypole and an exchange, once a mere bridle road from the city of London to the village of Charing; now one of the chief arteries, most busy and most thronged, of the teeming city. In this latitude lies the Precinct, and not one man in five hundred who jostle along the noisy Strand ever dreams of its existence.

The Precinct has a history, curious, antique, and picturesque; but to dwell on its records in detail would not only weary, but necessitate the mention of sundry well-known names and events that would at once entirely lay bare that which, with all my confidences, I wish to preserve a semi-secret. It is enough to hint that a king of France was once entertained, most hospitably for a prisoner of war, in the Precinct; that here were an ecclesiastical hospital and an almshouse for aged men; that here were once a military prison and a manufactory of alum; and that here the immediate successors of Caxton and Wynkyn de Worde set up their printing-presses. The little old church, much modernised by the munificence of Georgius Ultimius, King, Defender of the Faith, but in patches of its exterior walls a fabric of the densest antiquity, I will call St. Mary-le-Chou. About fifty yards to the north-east, a precipitous break-neck staircase of worn stone, called Cabbage-steps, leads into the Strand above; for the Precinct is built on an inclined plane, which renders necessary the application of the skid to the few wheels that graze its paving-stones. North-west, the Precinct is entered by a sly little street, running swiftly down hill, and which I will name Green-stuff-street. And if you want to get into the Precinct any other way you must either tumble into it from a balloon, or have a swim for it from the Surrey side.

It has been matter of much cogitation to me to call to mind in what manner I first became aware of the Precinct. I had certainly been broken into the ways of the Strand for years, and had resided in chambers or lodging-houses in nearly every street on the south side, from Northumberland to Norfolk-street, ere I became acquainted with this royal property. I used to think the short cut from Scotland-yard to Hungerford-market quaint and curious. I used to take much pleasure in that beautiful water-gate at the end of Buckingham-street (by

the house in whose first-floor our ETT lived and painted for years). I was one of a select few, I vainly plumed myself, who had explored the dark arches of the Adelphi at three in the morning, who knew that Salisbury-street was not a cul-de-sac guarded by a railing, but that a staircase—a staircase, oh ye fugitives!—led down to the foreshore of the Thames; one of a few who had walked on the Adelphi-terrace, and had noted that odd, embossed house at the corner of Adam and John streets. I flattered myself that few of my standing had imbibed porter among the jovial coalheavers at that mysterious hostelry called the "Fox under the Hill," or had shared with very early risers, and the ladies and gentlemen in the habit of frequenting the old stage door of the Strand Theatre, the knowledge that in Strand-lane are the old Roman baths, subsequently patronised by Her Majesty Queen Anne, and from which, the legends tell, a duct runs to the deep well of the "Old Dog," in Holywell-street. So men live for years, and fancy they are aware of the things around them, and of the strangest know nothing at all. Wellington, despite an apocryphal anecdote and a dubious engraving, never met Nelson; Mr. Howe dined for years in the house opposite to the residence of the wife he had so unaccountably deserted; and at least one eminent tragedian is profoundly ignorant of the very existence of his rival. How first I came to know the Precinct I can scarcely tell, and matters but little. It may have been on a mooning expedition, some solitary Sunday afternoon in the old time, when I had, properly, nothing to do, and, improperly, nowhere to go, and when it was my custom to wander up and down, and be thankful for what new localities turned up. It may have been, and I incline rather to this last theory, on some hot July afternoon, when meeting my friend, Tom Shrooder, and proposing to him cool refreshments, with straws, and ice, and lemon-peel galore, at the Divan, he laughed the idea of such expensive luxuries to scorn, and quoth:

"In such a thermometrical state, no honest man drinks anything but shandy-gaff. And, save at the Ginning Ape, at Walton-on-the-Naze, there is no drinkable shandy-gaff in England equal to Mrs. Turniptop's, at the Precinct Palace."

Now, Tom Shrooder knows the world as Bride-lane knows its betting-book, and a bill-discounter his Boyle's Court Guide and Army List. I had but to acquiesce in Shrooder's suggestion (he was hopelessly briefless here, went out to New Atlantis Island, under favour of my Lord Bacourind, and is now Chief Justice of the colony), but I could not help asking, humbly, where the Precinct was?

"Not know the Precinct!" cried Thomas, with a long whistle and a longer stare. "What an innocent, what a child of nature, what an unsophisticated griff you must be! The Precinct is the shadiest haunt in London. Shaded from the sun by architecture; shaded from the sheriff by happy obscurity; and, now that they have unsanctuarised Whitefriars and the Mint,

it is one of the few places in London where a man, so long as he hold his tongue, can hide his head. Presto! Come to the Precinct." And, somehow or other, Tom Shrooder spirited me away from a Hansom cab accident, from an omnibus, even from a van—with a brass band in it—proceeding to Highbury Barn; from a fire-engine, from all the turmoil and jangling of the Strand; and three minutes afterwards we were seated at the open window of the Precinct Palace's first-floor, sipping our shandy-gaff, and gazing at the chequered light and shade in the green old churchyard. Yes; I think that must have been my earliest introduction to the pleasant place.

I am almost ashamed to admit, now—when, after much hesitation and many misgivings as to being blackballed, I have had my name put up at the Podasokus Club—that the Precinct Palace is neither more nor less than a public-house. It is a highly respectable tavern, but it cannot be denied that the landlord is a licensed victualler and wears an apron, and that the place itself is a "public." But it was so long long ago that I visited it, I plead; and the Podasokus wasn't built then; and respectable people used to drop in sometimes at taverns, they used indeed. I am writing of a region far behind the time; and ere these lines are printed a law may be passed creating cabarets and wine-shops that may one day supersede taverns in toto, and leave the Precinct farther behind than ever. Be it as it may, it is impossible to know anything of the Precinct without frequenting the "Palace." Turniptop, the landlord, strongly asseverates that his hostel forms actual part and parcel of the ancient edifice itself. He appeals in corroboration of his statement to common, oral tradition, to his lease, which (as that parchment is kept securely locked up in a tin box together with his license, and a copy of the Morning Advertiser containing a report of his famous victory over a malevolent police sergeant who summoned him, A.D. 1850, for an infringement of the law in entertaining the members of the Cauliflower Club after midnight one Saturday, and who was shamefully nonsuited by one of the ablest magistrates that ever sat on the bench) must be considered testimony irrefragable, but not easily accessible. Turniptop, indeed, puts forward other proofs. He frequently produces a volume of the Mirror for 1832, in which is a woodcut representing an ancient gateway, not in the least resembling the modest brick tenement now licensed as the "Precinct Palace;" and he points triumphantly to a certain jagged stone in the wall, down stairs by the kitchen-boiler, as a relic of mediæval times. By the way, there is a legend that the whole Precinct was once sacked and burnt by the Kentish rebels under Jack Cade or Wat Tyler, I forget which; and a portion of Turniptopian inspiration may be due to a reminiscence of the man who was wont to point to a brick in the chimney as an unsaunderable proof that the house he lived in had once been inhabited by Jack Cade.

That there was once a palace in the Precinct is indubitable. I think that the last personages of importance who occupied it were some ambassadors from the seignory of Venice. I know that in the first decade of the present century the few ruinous walls of the palace that remained, enclosed a kind of enlarged black-hole for deserters and drunken culprits from the Guards, and also an unsavoury Pound or Barracoon, or dépôt for recruits. This dismal place was swept away, at about the period of the erection of Waterloo-bridge, and tall brick warehouses were erected on its site. But the Precinct had another more powerful and renowned palatial neighbour. Hard by, to the eastward, although Wellington-street and Lancaster-buildings now stretch between, is the royal property of Proudfoot House. To the moderns it is but a grey, stately mansion surrounding a quadrangle, with an allegory of Father Thames quite dry and looking into a bear-pit in the midst, the whole built by the Anglo-Swede Sir William Chambers; the apartments towards the Strand once giving lodging room to Royal Academicians and Fellows of the Royal Society, but now entirely occupied (with its handsome newly-built wing) by government offices. Few of the spruce clerks, the red-faced messengers, the hot stampers and weighers, the placid old gentlemen who sit in easy-chairs with little to do beyond signing their initials occasionally and drawing fifteen hundred a year regularly—few of these snug civilians know, or would probably care to know, that the site of their quiet offices was once occupied by an Inn of Chancery, by the palaces of the bishops of Chester and Worcester, and by one, if not two churches; and that the parishioners of St. Mary-le-Strand cried out "Sacrilege!" when the temples were razed to build the haughty duke's house. So it was, however, but as I design, some day, to say a few words concerning Proudfoot House, I will dismiss it now with the bare mention that until the middle of the last century the Precinct—my Precinct—shared with it the curious casualty, not uncommon in royal properties, of an invasion of "squatters." Many old and ruinous houses had been crept into and squatted down in by Bohemian men, and waifs and strays of town life. By degrees, finding themselves, through indifference, undisturbed, they began to let the tenements out to lodgers, called themselves landlords, and exacted rent forsooth, but the lodgers were quite as Bohemian and as cunning in their generation as they; and one of the notable humours of the Precinct a century since was, on the part of the lodgers, to take advantage of the pseudo-landlord's temporary absence to lock him out of the tenement he had squatted in, and, repudiating rent, to defy him from the window to produce a better title than possession, on his return. Thus the tenure in the Precinct was a mixture of Gavelkind, Borough English, Club law, frankalmoine, aubaine or escheat, and simple burglary. This jocose simplification of conveyancing told immensely; but at last the government, growing weary of the joke, issued a writ of ejectment, called in the posse comitatus

and a squad of the Foot Guards to turn all these unprofitable feudatories out, pulled down the tenements, rebuilt them, and let them to respectable tenants on favourable leases. But for this revolution, the houses in the Precinct would all be as old as a street in Chester, and probably as disorderly as Baldwin's-gardens.

The whole of the Precinct is to be perambulated—the church excepted—in about four minutes and a half; but if you wish to note its daily life, and watch its gaieties and gravities, you must choose summer-time, a fine morning, afternoon, or evening, and select as a point of espial the open window of the Palace up-stairs parlour. To think of the things that I have seen from thence! The church and churchyard are in themselves most edifying spectacles. If you would view the outside of St. Mary-le-Chou aright, look upon it at early morning, ere the working smoke has poisoned and obscured the air, ere that hot, damp, dusty day-cloud has arisen, man's stature high, the cloud that to me is always rife in London streets, and whose presence I ascribe to the peretual trampling of men's feet, and their thick-panting respiration, seeking gold or glory. At early morn there is not a quoin in the old church's wall, not a mullion in its blinking windows, not a cartouch or a cantaliver, but stands forth sharp and clear in its proper light, shade, and reflexion, as in a Venetian photograph. You shall see the rugosities of the stone as through an opera-glass; you shall count the strands in the cordage of the rigging of the great hayboats far away beyond at Hungerford. This early morning beautifies and enriches everything. As Sydney Smith used to bid his little servant-maid draw up the window-blinds on a sunshiny morning, and "glorify the room," so does the summer sun glorify the hoar old Precinct, and render lovely the ugly modern "improvements" in bricks and boarding. Even the sullen wreaths of smoke that *will* rise—all Smoke-prevention Acts notwithstanding—and accumulate in wreaths and ridges from kilns and furnaces never quenched, in far-off Bermondsey or remote South Lambeth; even this indomitable murk turns golden and cream-coloured when Aurora touches it with her finger-tips. As for the brazen ship-weathercock above St. Mary-le-Chou, it glows now golden bright, now apple-green, now delicate rose, now many-hued and mackerel-backed, like the auriferous dome of Izaak's Church in Petersburg. Away, the clock-tower of Westminster Palace rises, not like a kitchen clock—the guise it wears when you survey it from Bridge-street—but pale pink, shaded and fretted blue, and glittering with golden shafts. At early morn you can discern the dots that mark the minutes, from numeral to numeral, on the dial. Nearer to us one of the gaunt pagodas of Hungerford-bridge is as graceful as a campanile; in the extreme distance ugly wharfs and boat-builders' sheds harmonise and blend into delightful airiness; and in the foreground the tall brick warehouses and simple dwelling-houses, with their white door-steps and green blinds, have rich shadows

of bistre and sienna, giving the delicately tinted prospect a massive framing. As for the trees and the grass in the old churchyard—they thrive wondrously for London vegetation, and gather no smoke—they can scarcely be said to be green at early morn. The leaves and herbage seem chameleon-hued. You shall find maize and primrose in their lights, blue and purple in their shadows. Laminæ of silver, play on blades and veins, and, upon my word, I think that on summer nights the Dew falls here—the only dew that is shed in all London, beyond the tears of the homeless.

Such is the Precinct at early morning, and before Lucifer has rung for his shaving-water, and with his cloven foot stamped on the floor to wake his down-stairs neighbour Mammon. The Board of Health have long since sealed the churchyard; but that God's Acre looks, with its white and grey tombstones, so peaceful and so tranquil, that I should not wonder at the sternest opponent of intramural interments leaving directions in his will that application should be made for permission for his dust to be mingled with that of the forefathers of this secluded hamlet. I have incited several artistic friends to bring down easels and drawing-boards, and limn me a picture, or at least a sketch, of St. Mary-le-Chon and the surrounding Precinct; but I am convinced, now, that the only European painter capable of transferring the scene to canvas is Mr. Millais. I am grieved to add, by way of caution, that from any pictorial representations of the Precinct should be excluded sundry high-loomed placards bearing inscriptions that relate to Pickles and Sauces, to Pale Ale, and to Durham coals, placards which in their commercial commonplace mar the fair prospect. Again, let me remark that, true to my usual habit of looking at the outside of things, I have never yet visited the interior of the church. I hear there are a nobly carved roof-tree, a rare window, and some curious monuments. A mystic-looking old woman potters about the iron gate and the flagged avenue that leads to the principal door. I see her on week days, mostly, and from the battered state of her bonnet and sundry manifestations of brooms and scrubbing-brushes pervading her outward woman, I conjecture her to be the charwoman-housekeeper of the church. I positively saw her sweeping out the churchyard one day, which gave me a pleasant notion of her tidiness. The duties of the incumbent (whom everybody seems to like) must be easy. He knows all the parishioners, and they know him, and the coalies, who are the fortissimi of the Precinct, touch their sou'westers to him as he glides about. There are never any disputes about church-rates that I know of here,—how should there be? Royalty, I presume, takes care of its own property—and the poor-rates amount to about half a farthing in the pound once in every quarter of a century. The Precinctians go to church with great regularity, but the odium theologium does not thrive here, and the clergyman has not yet decorated his fabric with bouquets of

cut carrots and turnips from Covent Garden market. A decent spirit of toleration reigns; and farther down towards the water there is a quaint little Lutheran High Dutch chapel, also possessing its tiny paddock of a churchyard, and watched over by a stout sexton of great gravity of countenance and sobriety of conversation. With two cemeteries within its limits the Precinct might not unreasonably be suspected to be given to ghosts when the moon is up; but then the inhabitants are all so cheerful, and the younger portion are so much addicted to sweet-heating by the churchyard rails, that the ghosts wouldn't have a chance, and I suppose have cast themselves in disgust into the Thames, and become Pixies, ferriers, and Undines.

I hope it is not irreverent on my part to observe that the long cool walks by the churchyard walls have been, and are still, made to serve the interests of the British Drama. I don't mean that the walls are placarded with play-bills, or woodcut broadsheets; on the contrary, both beggars and bill-stickers seem banished from the Precinct by a stern though tacit ostracism; but in my early days of Precinctism I used frequently, on week days, to discern sundry clean-shaven, dark-eyed gentlemen, very shiny as to their hats, very spruce and natty as to their attire, who stalked gravely up and down the shady walks, holding small printed books in their hands, which they perused with great earnestness. Their eyes were often upturned, and rolled somewhat, and they occasionally muttered to themselves. Alarmed for the interests of the Church of England and the Protestant Succession, I was at first inclined to surmise that these mysterious persons were hierophants of the Romish persuasion, Oratorians, Jesuits of the short robe, or something of that kind, and that they came hither to read their breviaries as an insidious means of displaying their superior sanctity, and of perverting the peaceful Protestants of the Precinct, Popewards. But when as it fell upon a day, brushing the skirts of one of the gentlemen with the shiny hats and the natty garments, and hearing him declaim something about cloud-capped towers and gorgeous pinnacles, and chancing a few days afterwards to meet another shiny and natty student quietly puffing at a snowy pipe, and imbibing cold sherry-and-water in the parlour of the Palace, I made inquiries; I gained information; and I arrived at a more reasonable conclusion. I discovered that these studious gentlemen were actors who came to the Precinct, as an eminently quiet place, to study their parts. This accounted for the cloud-capped towers and the gorgeous pinnacles, the shiny hats and the natty coats.

There was a horse, too, that puzzled me sorely ere I graduated in these Precinct mysteries. A brown, ill-groomed, somewhat weak-kneed and wall-eyed quadruped he was; his saddle not handsome, his bridle not bright, but he with a rounded white nose indicating much meekness and docility of character. Every afternoon, till about seven P.M., I used to see him placidly standing in the Precinct, riderless, and tethered to the

churchyard rails. What could this horse have been? Was he the Bavica of some Cid of the Strand who had come here to woo—I have said how popular sweetheating is in the Precinct—to love and to ride away? Was he the solitary sample of equine merchandise offered here in a horse market held under charter of some Plantagenet kings, but now well-nigh fallen into desuetude? I little knew at the time that this meek-nosed dobbie was a charger of prodigious speed, that he was the renowned horse belonging to the Meteor evening newspaper, the horse that is supposed to publish the third and fourth editions of that post meridian sheet as he careers through the Strand. I met him at last in the City, hot, rampant, covered with foam, a boy and a bundle of newspapers on his back. He enfiladed seemingly impassable blocks-up of carts and carriages. He struck fire from the pavement. He came and there was a clatter; he went and there was steam. And when I returned to the Precinct I found him; as of yore, quietly tethered to the churchyard railings and rubbing his meek nose against the cool iron.

Little by little I found out the secrets of this charmed spot; but to this day I have not been able to discover why members of the theatrical orchestras of the metropolis should be so fond of taking afternoon refreshment in the Palace parlour. The Precinct itself is on the wrong side of the way to be in a theatrical neighbourhood: why should the primo violino, the contrabasso, the oboe, and the kettle-drum come hither? To be sure, Garrick lived in the Adelphi, and Doctor Burney in Adam-street, and the House of the Society of Arts is close by; but there must be some deeper reason for this musical affection for the spot than a mere remembrance of dramatic and lyric tradition. Was the Precinct originally built by Old King Cole? Why the typographers from the Meteor and the Orb (the opposition evening journal) should patronise the down-stairs parlour of the Palace is easy of comprehension. The frequenting of the bar by the industrious gentlemen who collect murders, fires, and dreadful accidents on the public behalf, is likewise to be satisfactorily explained, for are not the offices both of the Meteor and the Orb in the busy Strand close by? Again, one knows that there are great brewers and coal-merchants' wharfs at the river extremity, and this at once renders accountable the constant presence of coalheavers and draymen.

They don't make so much noise as might be expected, these coalies and pale-ale tunners. The drags are of course carefully adjusted to the broad wheels of the drays and waggons; the incline to the wharfs is easy; when any Precinctian is dangerously ill, straw is laid down before his door, and the charioteers are enjoined to be careful; and, on the whole, I think the Precinct people like the slow lumbering wains,

and regard the drowsy grinding of the wheels at night as a drowsy lullaby. The Precinctians are not much given to the utterance of violent opinions, under any circumstances. They are quiet folks, dwelling peaceably in the little houses, with the white door-steps and the green blinds, which nestle round the church of St. Mary-le-Chou and the Heileger Sauerkraut, High Dutch Lutheran chapel. As to vocation, from the brass plates on their doors, and from their smooth bald heads and subdued whiskers, I take them to be mainly accountants, clerks, retired tradesmen, commission-agents, and employés, interested in pale ale, in pickles, and Wallsend coals. There is one ancient gentleman, in a white beard and gaiters, who dwells all by himself in a house in a corner, and who, I am certain, is the original "oldest inhabitant," not only of the Precinct, but of the entire liberties of Westminster. He looks old enough to remember Jack Cade and the Kentish rebels. The matrons of the Precinct are ruddy, and given to the wholesome practice of early marketing. Pretty servant maids and handsome daughters abound—the latter not too proud to fetch the dinner and supper beer from the Palace with their own fair hands, and sometimes indulging in a little Platonic sweetheating in the silvery moonlight under the churchyard walls. But Platonic, mind! No goings on, no shocking doings in the chaste and decorous Precinct. The policeman is not popular among the female population. Nigger melodies are never heard. A Life Guardsman once swaggered into the Palace bar—it is true it was Easter time—made a feint of drinking Miss Copping's supper half-and-half; winked at Mrs. Turniptop; offered to chuck the barmaid under the chin, and otherwise behaved in a Riche-lieu and Lovelacean manner, but he was soon frowned down by the landlord and the regular customers. He slunk away at last, and was never seen in the Precinct again. Turniptop, a placable but resolute man when need was, declared that if ever this abandoned dragoon darkened his doors more—such were the terms he used—he would give him a piece of his mind, and what was more, "report" him: threats dreadful to think of!

So run the sands of life through this quiet hour-glass. So glides the Life away in the Old Precinct. At its base, a river runs for all the world; at its summit, is the brawling raging Strand; on either side, are darkness and poverty and vice; the gloomy Adelphi Arches, the Bridge of Sighs, that men call Waterloo. But the Precinct troubles itself little with the noise and tumult, and sleeps well through life, without its fitful fever.

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